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“Boobies” Technique
Preseason Primer
North Fork Feather River
Interview - Gary Borger
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Charles is the newest member of the Fly Water Travel sales team and specializes in the trout and steelhead fisheries of the Pacific Northwest, the Rockies, and British Columbia. A passionate and experienced angler, he has spent the past five years as a full-time trout and steelhead guide on Oregon's Deschutes River.



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DAVID LASS

David runs the Tahoe office for Trout Unlimited, a national sportsman's organization working to conserve, protect and restore North America's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds. From the trout friendly town of Truckee, David looks over all public lands issues in the Sierra, and works to protect the last, best places we have to fish.



LANCE GRAY

A twenty year veteran of the fly fishing community Lance has worked in all aspects of fly fishing. Lance with his wife Kirsten own Lance Gray & Company (www.lancegrayandcompany.com), a full service outfitter. Lance is a master fly tier, guide, instructor, author and travel agent. Lance lives in Willows, CA with his wife Kirsten and their two children Taylor and Garrett.



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A born-and-raised Truckee native. Stefan has been fly fishing, guiding, and tying flies for over 17 years. Pursuing wild trout and steelhead with his unique flies is his passion in life. He is also a commercial fly tier and the President of the Truckee River Chapter of Trout Unlimited.



From The Publisher

By the time you open this issue of Sierra Fisherman, daylight savings time will have started and the sun will be setting around 7:00 in the evening. That's good news. As the little fat kid in the TV commercial says, "Things are looking up".

Exciting things are happening here at Sierra Fisherman magazine. We get calls and e-mails every issue asking for our magazine. This is a reminder, our "flip-page" version is at www.sierrafisherman.com and our downloadable "pdf" version is at www.forward-bound.com. Nevertheless, we are on the move with a true World Wide Edition with multimedia content and interactive links. It will be readable, searchable and, most importantly, accessible from any hand held device or computer in the World for only pennies per issue.

This issue has some great stuff to get you started for the coming season. Gary Borger's Interview shares his expertise and knowledge in a detailed discussion of light penetration. On the stillwater side, Phil Rowley shares his Preseason Primer, and Bill Forward's piece on "Boobies" will introduce you to a new set of flies and a number of techniques for using them. And I thought a "washing line" was something you hung clothes on.

Also learn a tip on casting, read about Trout's needs, tie a new pattern and get excited about "Steelheading" this fall in the Western States. In short, you are going to learn a lot!

Have a great spring.



photo: John Fochetti

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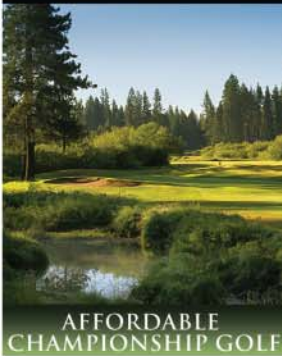
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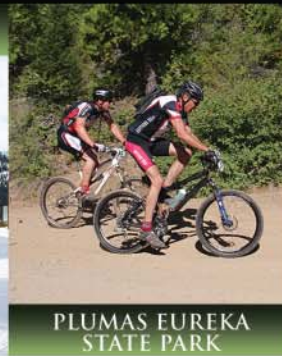
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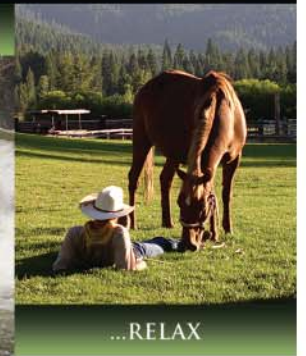
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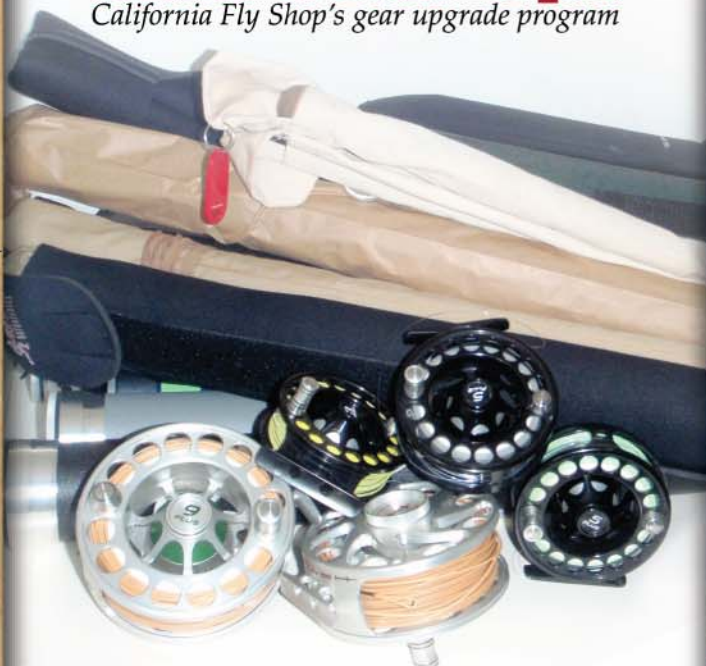


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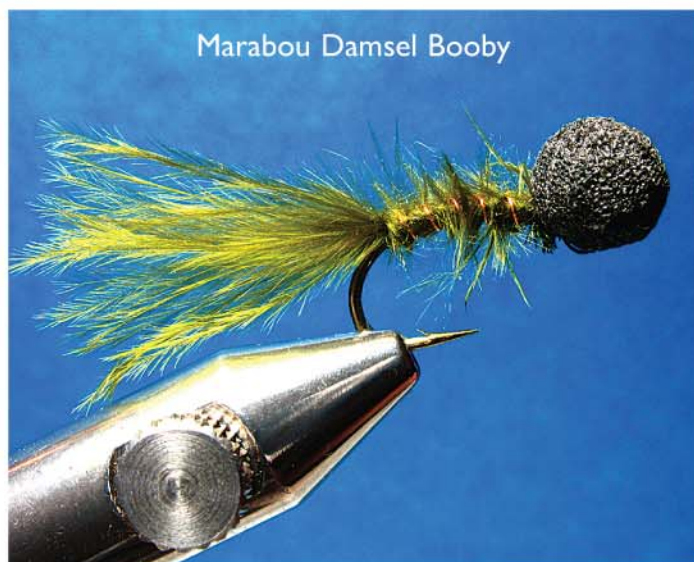


Think about Boobies! I know I have since I first discovered them. With very few exceptions, I know readers are thinking about the large, blue footed shore birds with pointed wings, long bills, and facial air sacs under their skin that cushion their impact with water when they dive from heights into the sea in their pursuit of prey... and you thought you weren't exceptional! Nevertheless, there are other Boobies worthy of consideration, chiefly the fly-fishing variety.

Let's first consider Boobies historically (I am having way too much fun writing this!). In the 1970's, Gordon Fraser, the eminent British fly-fisherman and author, set out to create a pattern that could be fished deeply in stillwater (near dams) using very fast sinking lines. To make the problem even more complex, he wanted to fish it extremely close to the bottom without fear of hang-ups. He concluded buoyancy was the answer. Actually, his final creation did hang up, because that was what prevented it from snagging on debris beneath it.

Enter women's pantyhose, quite literally. By utilizing a small piece of nylon mesh from the garment, Fraser managed to attach two small polystyrene beads to the front of his pattern. As a side note, buoyancy at depth was not a new idea (Doug Swisher, Charles Brooks, Carl Richards, et. al.), but Fraser's employment of polystyrene and the way he fished it was. The two polystyrene balls gave the creation a somewhat feminine appearance, hence the name Booby Nymph... proving once again that beauty is in the eyes of the

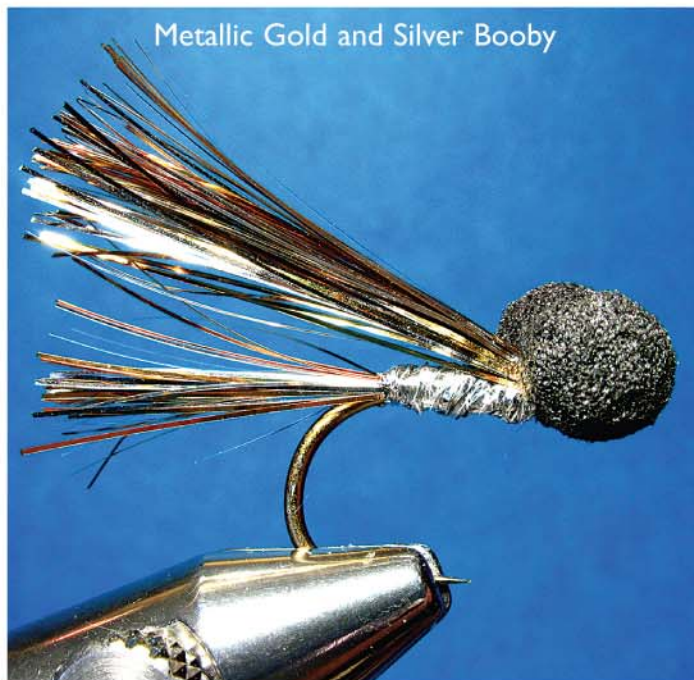
beholder. Fraser held that his pattern, though impressionistic as opposed to realistic, was representative of several aquatic insect species including dragonfly and damsel nymphs, as well as small bait fish. In his book, the pattern is tied with only 6 to 12 fibers from a hen pheasant's tail feather, depending on the hook size (10 to 14). The remaining portions of those fibers were then wrapped around the hook's shank forming the body similar to the way a pheasant tail nymph is tied. It was a truly sparse pattern compared to Boobies of today that generally have stouter bodies with denser marabou tails, and don't resemble a nymph by any



Marabou Damsel Booby

stretch of the imagination (see the lead photo). I present this information as not only one fly tier to another, but also to give even the most casual reader a keen insight into the originator's thinking.

This pattern is not as popular, used, or even known in the States as it is in Britain, Canada, and New Zealand, and I can't explain why. Boobies and the techniques associated with presenting them are so effective that they have been banned from use in more than several waters in the UK, including the Welsh Trials Fly-Fishing Competitions. True, I resisted using them for a long time myself, at first testing and fishing them in seclusion. Not because I am a diehard traditionalist, but most probably because it looked like something that should be hung on a Christmas tree rather than the end of my fly line. Sometimes one just has to swallow one's pride.



Through that unabashed experimentation (note my Marabou Damsel Booby, size 12), I found Boobies to be extremely versatile and I am going to share several very different rigging methods and techniques associated with fishing these flies. However first, I strongly recommend that you master the Non-Slip Loop Knot. There are several advantages to using this knot- three obvious, and one not so obvious. First and foremost, it allows for a great deal of lateral movement of flies during retrieves, hopefully presenting a more natural look than the common Clinch Knot would allow. Secondly, it is easy and fast to tie. Thirdly, a precisely sized loop can be created and maintained. The not so obvious advantage of the Non-Slip Loop Knot is that the tag end of the knot won't snag weed or debris in the water as many other knots do. As can be seen in the last step of Figure 1, the tag end points at the fly, not in the direction that the fly is stripped.

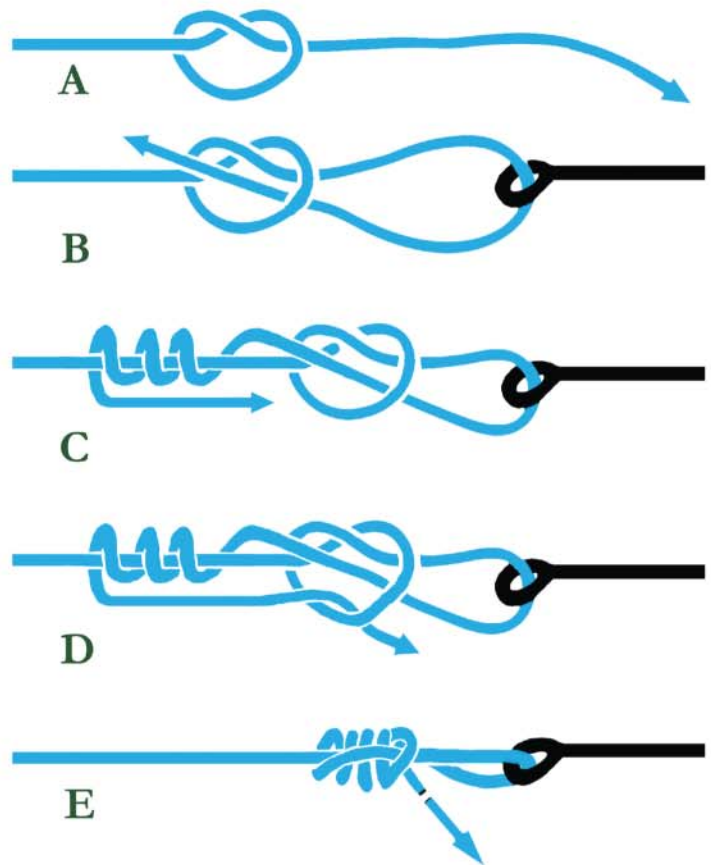


Figure 1. Non-Slip Loop Knot

Non-Slip Loop Knot tying instructions (Figure 1):

1. Tie an Overhand Knot four inches from the end of tippet (A).
2. Pass the tag end through eye of the fly and through the Overhand Knot (B).
3. Adjust the loop size and wind the tag end around the tippet three to four times above the Overhand Knot (C).
4. Bring the tag end back through the Overhand Knot (D).
5. Lubricate, readjust the loop, pull tight and trim (E).

Practice this knot while watching television, so it too becomes a mindless activity. Use large tippet and flies at first, moving to smaller sizes as your dexterity increases. I admit when I execute the last step, it looks like a three way tug of war between the line in one hand, the fly in the other hand and the tag end held by my teeth. Oh well, doing it my way lubricates the knot. Yeah, I know . . . too much information!

The Low Rider

Onto technique... as noted previously, Boobies were initially designed to be fished with high speed sinking lines in deep water near the bottom, as experienced stillwater fly anglers knew that fishing a foot or two above the bottom/substrate is exceptionally productive. However, leader length becomes extremely critical when a sinking line is meant to follow the contour of the bottom/substrate and the fly is to swim above. Only

Figure 2. Path of a Booby on a Sinking Line



three to four feet at times, it is short compared to typical nymphing standards. This pattern is exceedingly buoyant and it will attempt to swim up at every given opportunity. Hence, once presented, the fly will always be above the sinking line. During a retrieve, a "strip" vigorously swims the fly downward at an angle, and a pause allows the fly to swim upward at an angle (See Figure 2). Of course, the Non-Slip Loop will only enhance the action. Boobies' behavior underwater is just the opposite of the weighted nymphs that we are used to; instead of the Boobies being pulled up in the water column when retrieved, they are pulled down! The rules have been changed. This action mimics aquatic situations when would-be prey have to fight buoyancy and vigorously swim down to survive. Naturally, varying the retrieve speed will mimic different species of prey, e.g. faster for bait fish, slower for damselfly. And combining retrieve speed with all the different sinking line options that are available today will also give us a means of precisely controlling depth. And anglers wonder why foam beetles work so well!

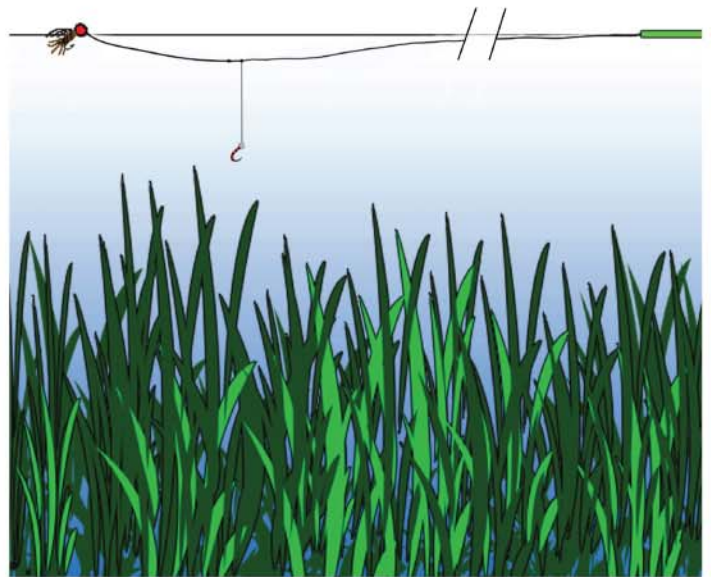
Green Eye Two Tone Booby



The Indicator

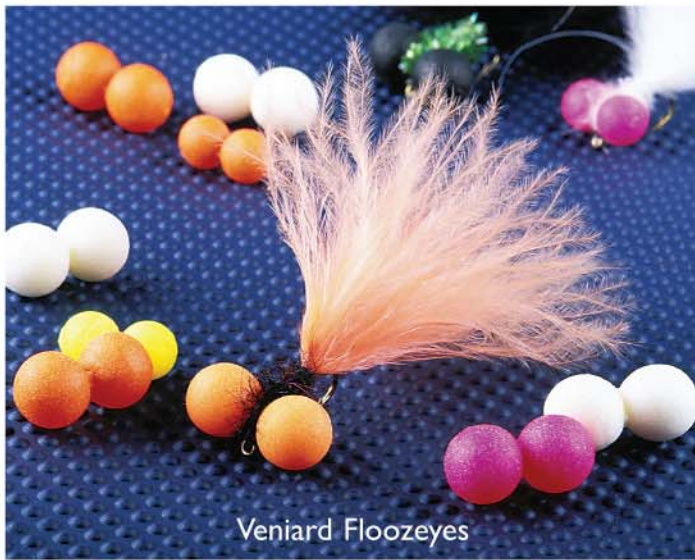
A second technique involves taking advantage of this attractor pattern's size, color and buoyancy, employing the Booby as a lethal strike indicator (like the Hopper-Dropper combo), with a floating line. Nothing is more frustrating than having a trout take a strike indicator as opposed to the fly. As a guide, I am diligent about stopping clients from reacting when a trout takes the indicator. More often than not, if the angler sets-up the trailing flies will snag the trout and we are all in trouble. When using a Booby fly as a strike indicator, the point fly can be tied off either the bend or the eye of the Booby. I have experimented with running a loop through the eye of the Booby and looping it back over to facilitate quick depth adjustments with very little success. Even when I used large flies, small diameter tippet and CF DESIGN's finest threaders, I found it faster just to re-rig.

Figure 3. The Washing Line



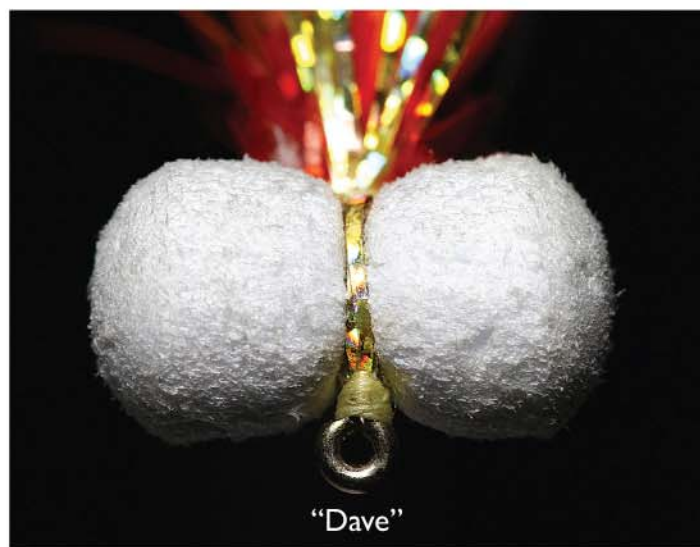
The Washing Line

The Booby is a great attractor pattern in its own right, but when combined with nymphs in the Washing Line technique, an angler can target trout feeding within six inches of the surface or counter the frustration of trout feeding over weed beds that are close to the water's surface where typical nymphing techniques are rendered useless. (Greased leader/tippet techniques with small flies will present near the surface. However, it quickly fails when the weight of the fly is even minutely increased.) Often called Boobies and Buzzers by the British, this floating line technique places a Booby on point (at the end of your rig) and suspends Buzzers (midges and chironomids) between it and the floating line (See Figure 3). Thus allowing these small patterns to be fished in not only open water, channels and pot holes, but also over very shallow weed beds where



feet apart. However, since the cone of vision of a trout is smaller the nearer the trout is to the surface, an angler can get away with rigging the flies closer, the shallower the Buzzer (nymph) is dangled. One method of attaching the suspended fly involves using a double overhand knot or a blood knot and leaving a long tag end to tie on the nymph to be suspended (adjusting for depth as needed). Another method I learned from my good friend Phil Rowley. Tie three to four feet of tippet material on to your leader using a triple overhand knot. Attach the Booby to the end of that. Tie a Perfection loop at one end of 18" of tippet material and loop it onto the leader above the knot, towards the rod. Then tie the fly to be suspended onto the end of that. This permits the tippet with the nymph to slide freely above the knot, yet be changed swiftly by simply unlooping it. Phil often utilizes a micro-ring or micro-swivel several feet above his point flies in place of the knot mentioned above.

conventional rigs would normally hang-up. Don't limit Boobies to just suspending midges and chironomids. Suspend snails, pheasant tails, Bird's Nests, etc., both BH and non-BH. As with all tandem rigs there is an increased chance of fouling. Mastering the presentation of this setup starts with opening up your cast. Of course presenting over shallow weeds brings on another problem... preventing the trout from seeking cover in the vegetation directly beneath it once it has taken the fly. Here are several suggestions when using a Washing Line over shallow weed beds: setup swiftly, keep the rod tip up, quickly get the trout under control (steering from left to right as needed), and use heavy tippet.



Though Boobies come in all shapes, sizes and colors, few fly shops in California handle them. However, I did find researching "Boobies" online to be tremendously rewarding. Nevertheless, a word of caution from personal experience, when searching for "Boobies" online make sure you include the term "Fly-Fishing", and when using Google Images, be sure the Search Setting is set to "Strict Filtering"... otherwise you apparently get "grounded from the computer for a month!" However, I did locate and contact Craig Barr in the UK <http://www.flashattackflies.com>, who graciously sent a wonderful selection of pre-made Booby eyes and several Booby patterns for this article. If you need a little more help, feel free to e-mail (Info@forward-bound.com). By the time this issue gets printed, I should have my privileges back.



Should an angler use the non-slip loop to tie the Booby on point using the Washing Line technique? That is up to the angler's comfort level in casting the rig; it doesn't hurt and may allow both to dangle a bit more freely. I don't believe it is important. The true question is where and how to attach the Buzzer (the suspended fly). Considering distance first, the point fly (Booby), should not distract or put off the trout from the suspended fly, so they are generally placed three to four



Editor's note: Phil Rowley, my friend and fellow stillwater fly-fisher by trade, has a talent for writing narratives that not only paint vivid pictures in your mind, but are filled with information. So, grab a pencil and piece of paper and take a few notes (especially about the flies) because I asked him if he would make a few minor adaptations to one of his previously published articles specifically for you... the Sierra Fisherman. Enjoy. BF



Check Your Rods and Reels

Preseason Primer

By Phil Rowley

The gentle swirl of a foraging Lave Davis trout, the bow wave of a late fall Eagle Lake rainbow chasing scuds in the near shore shallows or the firm grab and head-shake of a large Lahontan cutthroat. These are some of the numerous memories entrenched in the minds of stillwater fly fishers everywhere. Gathered from a myriad of experiences these visions are stored in a special cache, ready to access in a moment's notice when the everyday stresses squeeze us a little more than we would prefer.

As the season wanes and winter slips her icy grip around the lakes of the Sierra Nevada it is these memories that help ease the pain of another passing season. But when winter is at her darkest and coldest these recollections begin to work against us. Weakened under the relentless barrage of cold, rain and fog, we all slip into the clutches of that magical illness, cabin fever. Left uncontrolled it consumes all, making the remaining winter one of sheer agony. But the stillwater fly fisher can fight cabin fever by turning this negative energy into something positive by beginning their preparations for the upcoming season. Those who are primed and ready will be amongst the first on the water as the first lakes of season become ice-free and we are released once again to add to our mind's eye.

Fly fishers should be familiar with the most likely food sources on the menu during the inaugural weeks of the new season. A good basic approach focuses upon stillwater staples, those food sources that are available

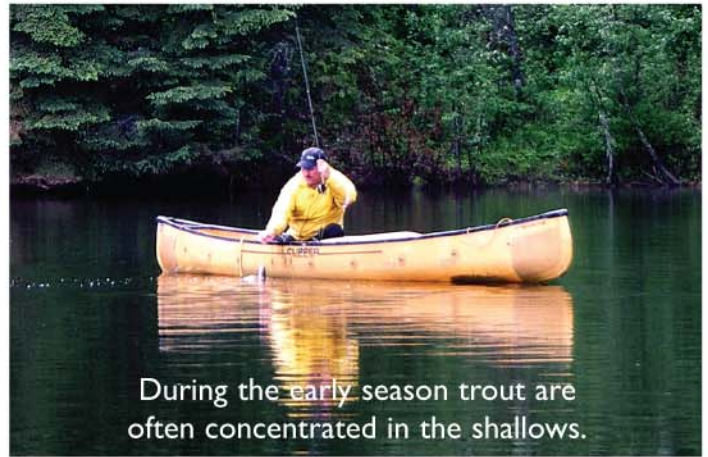
year round. Chances are hatches will be few and far between. Scour the fly box, make note of the voids and fill them. Sit down at the vise or visit the fly shop and restock the promising rookies from last season, hopefully they won't suffer from any sophomore jinx, don't forget the old standbys either. They don't earn the title standby for nothing.

The early season stillwater fly fisher needs a varied selection of leech patterns. Have a complimentary selection of both somber and garish designs such as Brian Chan's Sparkle Leech. Although ice-free the water temperature is still low and fish often need to be coaxed into striking. Bright patterns take advantage of the trout's aggressive nature eliciting an instinctive conditioned response. If a dead slow or inactive presentation is necessary, chironomid patterns, either larva or pupa, will be the order of the day. Black and copper or black and red such as my Black Sally are great springboards. Be observant, as other colors such as olive, brown and various shades of green are important too. Have a mixed size range from #10 down through #16 and expect to fish the smaller patterns. Bloodworm or larval imitations should range from size 12 through 16 in red, maroon, green and a unique barber pole combination of red and green. Bead headed leech and chironomid patterns should also figure prominently.

Other flies to consider include scuds, dragon fly nymphs, damsel fly nymphs, caddis larva and water boatman. Owing to their productive and active life styles

scuds, as most fly fishers are aware are a year round food source. Early in the season photosynthesis has had limited effect so the weed growth is low. Large food sources such as caddis larvae, with and without cases, and prowling dragon fly nymphs stand out against the stark pre season landscape. This visibility does not go unnoticed by trout. Besides scuds, other food sources active and apt to be tracked down in open water are water boatman, their backswimmers cousins and damsel fly nymphs. As aeropneustic or air breathing insects, boatman and backswimmers must make constant trips to and from the surface to replenish their air supply. With each trip they expose themselves to constant danger. Choose patterns utilizing bright materials such as Crystal Chenille or Mylar. Successful patterns incorporate distinct mobile legs fashioned out of rubber hackle, Super Floss or Silicone rubber. Like leeches boatman and backswimmers patterns are a great method of covering water and coaxing dour or sulking trout into an aggressive response. Damsels are mobile predators always in search of a new ambush position. Slender mobile patterns made of marabou, after-shaft feathers or rabbit are perfect for exploring weed pockets, tulle beds and sunken debris. Sizes 8 through 12 in shades of olive, green, and brown should cover the bases.

With the fly box up to strength there are other tackle considerations. Early season stillwater fly-fishing is a pre turnover affair and successful fly fishers understand this condition and its effect on trout. For the unfamiliar, books such as Brian Chan's Fly Fishing Strategies for



During the early season trout are often concentrated in the shallows.

Stillwaters is a valuable reference. Still under the effect of winter stratification trout are trapped in the shallows so floating and intermediate lines bear the brunt of the work. Make sure they are clean and ready for action. Check the backing knots for signs of deterioration and retie or replace as necessary. At the same time make sure fly reels are lubed and in good working order. Intermediate lines allow for long distance casts and horizontal retrieves. This line pays big dividends when covering water with a leech, boatman or damsel pattern. Often a steady strip retrieve is needed to get fickle trout to chase and follow the fly. Be prepared for the take at the end of the retrieve just prior to roll casting the line up for the re-cast.

Sift though last year's leader and tippet supply, anything that snaps like thread dispose of. Typical leader



Check your equipment bag and all of its compartments



fall and other structure, almost like bass. Watch for rolling fish to identify these key hotspots. If the trout are rolling and active, chances are they can be caught. Casts need to be accurate and depths have to be precise, and often the only method to work a fly under these urgical presentation requirements is through the use of a strike indicator. There are many styles on the market including traditional corkies and newer yarn types. Be sure to have a healthy collection. Bi-colored corkies make perfect snarl alarms, knowing what color should be facing the angler warns of potential tangles should the other color suddenly stare back. Left unchecked and recast a few dozen times this easy to fix tangle can evolve into one ugly birds nest.

lengths fall into the 12 to 18 foot range depending upon the fly line and presentation technique. A relative newcomer to North American stillwaters is Airflo's Poly Leaders. Poly Leaders are available in 5 or 10-foot lengths and densities ranging from floating to sinks like a rock, personal favorites include; floating, hover, intermediate and slow sink. Connected to the main line via loop-to-loop connections Poly Leaders provide fly fishers with increased versatility and the change of retrieve angle these leaders offer can provide the winning ticket under many situations.

Depending upon the lake, stillwater fly-fishing can be a location specific event. On some days it pays to be on the water early. Keep in mind that crowded conditions can exist. Proper manners and educate go a long way towards ensuring a pleasant experience for all. Trout are often concentrated in specific locales, such as sun warmed dark bottomed areas, close to tules, dead-

As the days lengthen and winters grip begins to relax the weather outside allows for other preparations. Dust off the boat, float tube or kick boat and give it a thorough check. Are there any rivets or seams in need of attention? Are the air bladders in safe shape? How's the anchor rope? Does it need to be replaced or retied? There is never a good time to lose an anchor. Check the anchor cleats. Are they in good working order? Are the pulley wheels intact or do they need replacement? Boat bound fly fishers should check the condition of their carpet for signs of wear and tear. A trip down to Home Depot might be in order, disguise this visit as an errand for something around the house. Deposits need to be made in the home account to counter balance the upcoming excursions once the lakes open. After a number of seasons wooden oars begin to show their age. Perhaps they can be salvaged with some sand paper and urethane. There is always something to do.

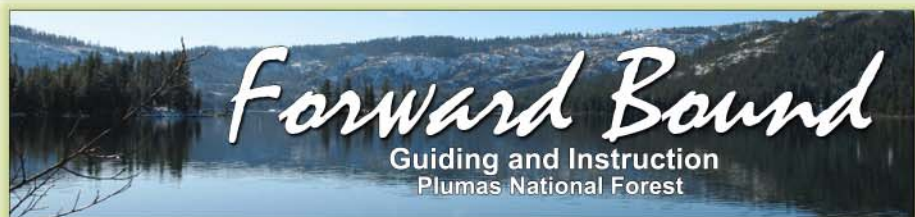
Make sure your pontoon boat
is in good working order



Don't forget the motor, make sure it is in good working order, take it in for service or if mechanically inclined change the leg oil and check the plugs. Fill up a garbage can full of water and give it a test run. Lakeside is no place to find motor problems. Electric motors while not as high maintenance as their gas driven counterparts need attention too. How is the battery? Is the prop good and secure? Does the darn thing still work? Don't forget to change that switch that broke and had to be jury-rigged just to get through the balance of last season.

With cabin fever all but eliminated through proper preparation it is time to focus upon the most likely venues for opening season. Lakes become ice free in popcorn fashion. Lower elevation lakes are naturally the first to open. Visit the local fly shops to find out what lakes are open. Friends who live nearby favorite haunts provide perhaps the most reliable information, not to mention a place to stay. Review last season's diary entries. Try to compare last year's conditions and ice off times to this season's. Is it late or will it be early? What flies worked? Where did you find the fish and what were they feeding upon? Pre season powers of observation pay handsome rewards.

Armed with a stocked arsenal of flies and functioning and well-conditioned equipment the first stillwater trip of the season should prove memorable. Potential target lakes have been identified and the trip planning is complete. Informed and prepared fly fishers know what food sources to expect and how to present them. They have researched pre turnover conditions and know where to find the fish and where to search if they are not where they should be. The negative effects of cabin fever have been reversed. It is part of the allure that makes fly fishing a year round pursuit.



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Western States Steelhead

By Charles Gehr

Photo: Ken Johnson

BEYOND THE CREST

Local Spey guide, Jon Hazlett throwing on the Rogue

Thinking of the Pacific Northwest as a region, rivers and anadromous fish not only shape the area but define it. Throughout history people living in the Pacific Northwest have prospered as a result of salmon and steelhead. To this day, the Pacific Northwest remains incredibly rich in the scope and diversity of its' angling opportunities. California, Oregon, Washington and Idaho provide year-round steelhead fly fishing. An angler just getting into steelhead fishing should focus on the rivers and times of year that are most amenable to their schedule and preferred method of fishing. Since steelhead fishing generally yields lower catch rates than fishing for other species you should enjoy the activity and the setting. Fortunately for us we still have enough fisheries to satisfy the tastes of all fly anglers from the seasoned, life-long steelheader to the avid trout angler looking for a new challenge. As a fly fishing travel specialist focusing on the trout and steelhead systems of the Pacific Northwest, the following rivers are my "go to's" for anglers looking to connect with my favorite species.

Grande Ronde

The Grande Ronde flows through eastern Oregon and Washington before draining into the Snake River near Lewiston, Idaho, and is considered one of the best late season steelhead rivers in the Pacific Northwest. Although the Grande Ronde has ample walk-in access, drifting the river on a multi-day float trip will give you a better feel for its wilderness attributes.

Throughout the month of October, the Ronde is as good a dry fly and greased line fishery as exists. As the season progresses and water temperatures drop in

November, anglers spend more time fly fishing light sink tips. The fly fishing can remain excellent through late November and later if water conditions permit. Grande Ronde steelhead are known for their willingness to move to a fly and range from 5 to 14 pounds, with the average fish typically weighing in around 6-7 pounds.

Deschutes

A Columbia River tributary, the Deschutes is a desert oasis rife with wild rainbows, hearty steelhead, whitewater and stunning scenery. The quintessential Deschutes trips are deluxe, multi-day float trips on both the upper and lower portions of the river. Best done as a three night, four day float, these trips offer anglers the best shot at the river's trout and steelhead and represent one of the West's greatest downriver fly fishing adventures. The steelhead fishing gets going as early as July on the lower Deschutes and peaks on the upper river from mid September through October. By most standards it is a big river where typical flows range from 4,000 -5,500c.f.s. Drift boats are used for transportation but no fishing is allowed from the boat. Be prepared for aggressive wading and dealing with low overhanging bushes on the Deschutes. During the steelhead season the Deschutes becomes a "temple of spey." This is one of the first rivers in the U.S. where the guides regularly employed the use of spey rods to cover water for these anadromous jewels. In fact it is often difficult to find single-handed anglers on the Deschutes during the prime steelhead months of September and October. Due to the dam-controlled nature of the Deschutes, most of the steelhead season provides ideal conditions for fishing a floating line.

Rogue

It is no coincidence that virtually all steelhead anglers have a Rogue River story. Aside from the long history and tradition of steelhead fly fishing on the Rogue, the fact remains that the Rogue River is one of the most consistent and approachable steelhead fisheries in the lower 48. Regardless of fly fishing technique, the upper Rogue River has water for everyone. Whether you like to drop heavily-weighted nymphs into dark slots under a strike indicator or ply the surface with a hitched skater the Rogue River has something to offer. Float trip opportunities abound on the Rogue and any number of outfitters are available to introduce you to southern Oregon's best-loved anadromous fishery. Day floats are common in the middle and upper reaches of the Rogue upstream of Grants Pass. Rogue River steelhead average five pounds and will generally be present in the upper river by mid-August. The prime months of September and October offer consistent catch rates and stable weather

Below Grants Pass the Rogue cuts a dramatic canyon through the Siskiyou's. This fifty-mile boat trip traverses a scenic and secluded stretch of the Rogue River. This particular stretch was designated as a "Wild and Scenic River" by congress in 1968, and therefore has only hiking trails and limited road access near the beginning and end of the trip. There is spectacular scenery, wildlife, white-water rapids and fly fishing, all of which provide for a unique experience for all ages and all levels of fly fishing experience. The season extends between late August and mid-November, and the fly fishing is generally good



Steve Rowe cradles a Grande Ronde treasure

throughout the season. Your quarry on the Wild & Scenic stretch will be the famous Rogue River "half-pounder". These are steelhead ranging from 14" to 24", with some larger fish up to ten pounds.

North Umpqua

It is impossible to discuss steelhead in the Pacific Northwest without mentioning the North Umpqua River. Oregon's North Umpqua River is the quintessential Cascadian river – steep, swift, crystal clear, and incredibly beautiful. It is also an iconic American classic that has captured the souls of countless anglers and drawn them back year after year to test their skills against one of the



Primetime on the upper Rogue



that swim in a swift, steep river so the fish you do hook are always memorable and rewarding. The fly water of the North Umpqua is roadside and can easily be accessed by those willing to walk down steep banks from the road to the river. The summer steelhead season extends from July through November.

Trinity

As California's top system for adult fly caught steelhead, the Trinity is a remarkable river that means many things to many people. There are countless ways to fly fish the Trinity and multiple reaches still rarely seen by the majority of visiting anglers. Due to the sheer number of summer steelhead, the upper river is rightly considered the system's bread basket. This section of the Trinity fishes exceedingly well from mid-October through January. Numerous day floats produce high catch rates for nymph fishermen making it the most popular venue for visiting anglers. For those keen on swinging flies and/or perfecting spey fishing techniques, the Trinity also has a great deal to offer. Swinging flies can be effective on the upper river; however, the lower sections of the Trinity offer more than forty miles of water with remarkably little competition and some of the most immaculate classic runs one could imagine. These lower sections of the Trinity can fly fish well as early as September, thus greatly extending the river's season. Arguably the state's most productive summer steelhead stream, the Trinity fly fishes from September through mid-March. Though the Trinity River is large enough to float, the majority of fly fishing is done while wading. While nymph fishing is very popular and productive, there is ample opportunity to swing flies.

most challenging and rewarding races of steelhead in the world. The North Umpqua's 32 miles of "fly only" water are among the most radically regulated waters in the West and prohibit the use of weight throughout the prime summer months. For those who seek the challenge and rewards of catching a steelhead on a dry fly, this is the ultimate playing field. Days spent on the North Umpqua are intense, physical, and more often than not, rewarding. Fly fishing the North Umpqua river for steelhead is a pilgrimage to one of the cradles of our sport. It is a river that has inspired anglers for generations. Summer steelhead on the North Umpqua range from 4 – 14 pounds, with the average steelhead coming in at 6 – 8 pounds. These are extremely hard-fighting steelhead



WINTER STEELHEAD

Winter is a magical time on the west coast. It is the time that rivers swell and draw runs of bright coastal steelhead in significant numbers. For many anglers the coastal rivers represent a maze of mist-shrouded waters that are difficult to fly fish effectively. For the determined northwest angler the coast is a limitless playground full of untold possibilities. If you're trying to find a coastal river that gets runs of winter steelhead look, no further than the first river you find on the map. If it flows directly into the Pacific in the months of January – March, it likely has some number of winter steelhead. The challenge of winter steelheading is not finding potentially productive rivers, it's fishing those streams under good conditions. Fluctuating water levels, fierce weather systems and elusive fish all combine to create the challenge of hooking a wild winter steelhead.

From January through early May coastal rivers from northern California to the north coast of Washington transform into some of the most interesting and seductive winter steelhead rivers in North America. Structurally they are a fly fisherman's paradise and the quarry is almost always sea bright, wild and willing to chase a well presented fly. This is true winter steelhead fishing and as such challenging weather conditions and relatively low catch rates are the norm. On the bright side, wild coastal steelhead are typically very bright and often large. Additionally, many rivers are very well suited to the fly and a great pleasure to fish.

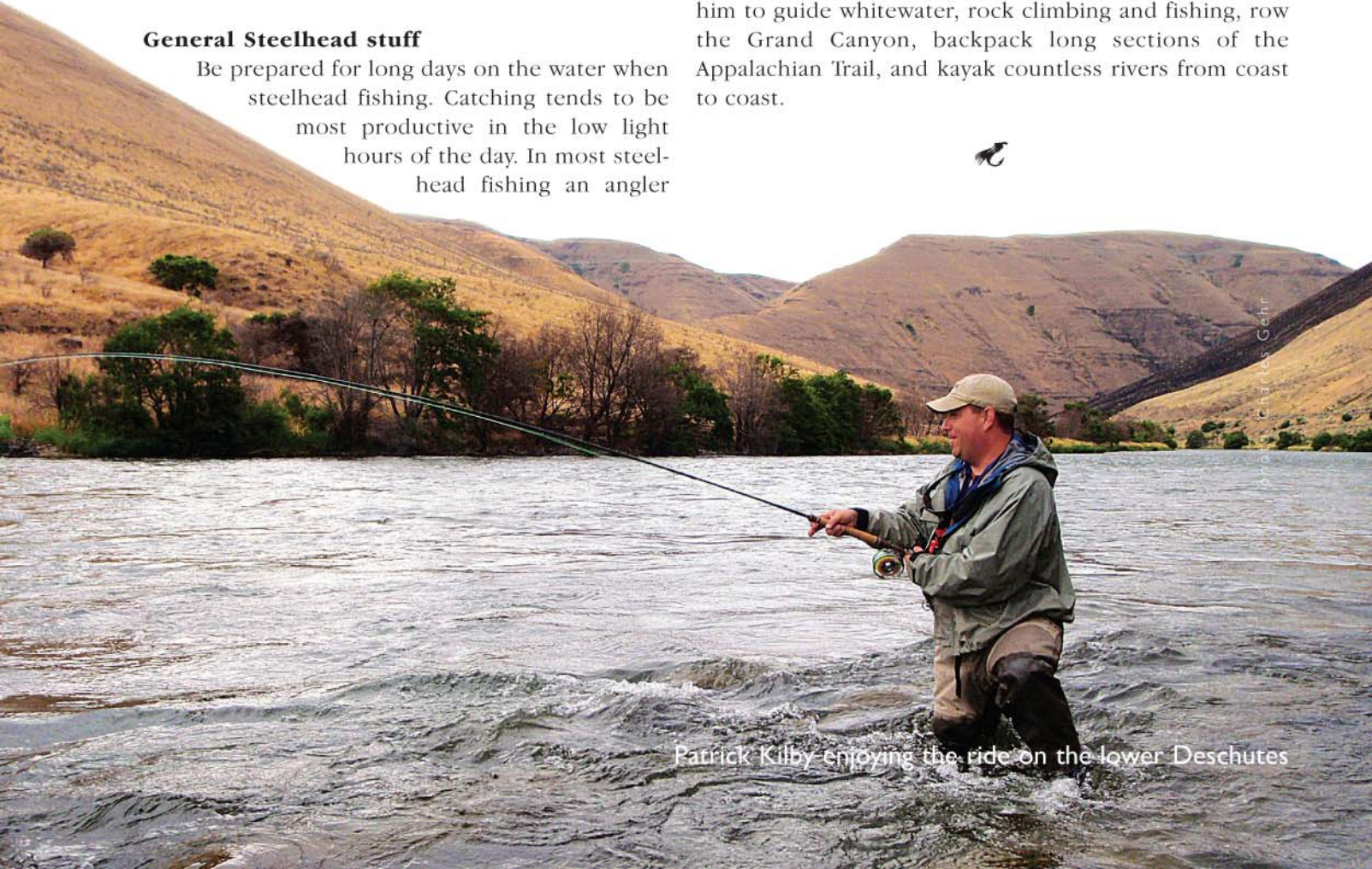
General Steelhead stuff

Be prepared for long days on the water when steelhead fishing. Catching tends to be most productive in the low light hours of the day. In most steelhead fishing an angler

should consider 2 good "pulls" or encounters a good day on the water. No matter your preferred fishing technique, you are fishing for an animal that is on its' way somewhere else. This means that, unlike resident species, the fish may not be there. Even the most productive pieces of water may not hold an anadromous fish at all times every day. Have confidence that you are covering the water well and know that you will need to cover a lot of river to eventually connect with a steelhead. Maintain the mindset of a hunter and you will soon know why steelhead and the Pacific Northwest are forever intertwined.

Bio:

Charles is the newest member of the Fly Water Travel sales team and specializes in the trout and steelhead fisheries of the Pacific Northwest, the Rockies, and British Columbia. A passionate and experienced angler, he has spent the past five years as a full-time trout and steelhead guide on Oregon's Deschutes River. Prior to his tenure on the Deschutes, Charles lived in Ashland, Oregon and fished the water of Southern Oregon and Northern California extensively. Charles is an excellent fly tier, an extremely gifted spey caster and the best informed member of our staff on spey tackle and techniques. A University of Wyoming alumni, Charles also has a deep affection for and knowledge of the vast and varied trout fisheries of the Rockies and the American West. His overriding passion for the outdoors and wild places has lead him to guide whitewater, rock climbing and fishing, row the Grand Canyon, backpack long sections of the Appalachian Trail, and kayak countless rivers from coast to coast.



Patrick Kilby enjoying the ride on the lower Deschutes



WISDOM OF THE CAST

AN INTERVIEW

WITH

GARY BORGER

By Bill Forward

Gary Borger is one of the world's eminent fly-fishing educators, writers, and personalities. He has fly fished over 55 years, teaching classes and lecturing internationally on all aspects of the subject. As a Professor Emeritus of Biology at the University of Wisconsin, Gary combines a unique understanding of the natural ways of trout, the physical world and the ability to communicate. His books on fly fishing include: *Presentation*, *Nymphing*, *Naturals*, *The Borger Color System*, and *Designing Trout Flies*, and are all best-sellers. His video credits are too numerous to mention. Suffice it to say, he has several dozen videos to his credit and was a consultant on the critically acclaimed movie *A River Runs through It*. I believe you will find this interview not only interesting but also a truly educational experience.

Q. Gary, what steps do you recommend fly anglers take in sizing up a stream before fishing it?

First, the angler must have a good sense of reading waters. Then the fly fisher looks for Sheltering Lies (a place where a fish finds only protection from predators), Feeding Lies (a place where a fish finds only food and no protection), and Prime Lies (offering both protection and food, simultaneously). From this perspective, the angler then sizes up the feeding situation—Opportunistic or Selective—and then selects the fly and tactic with which to approach the fish. Simple huh? Well, perhaps not, but there must be a diagnostic stream somewhat similar to this because random guessing will usually catch nothing.

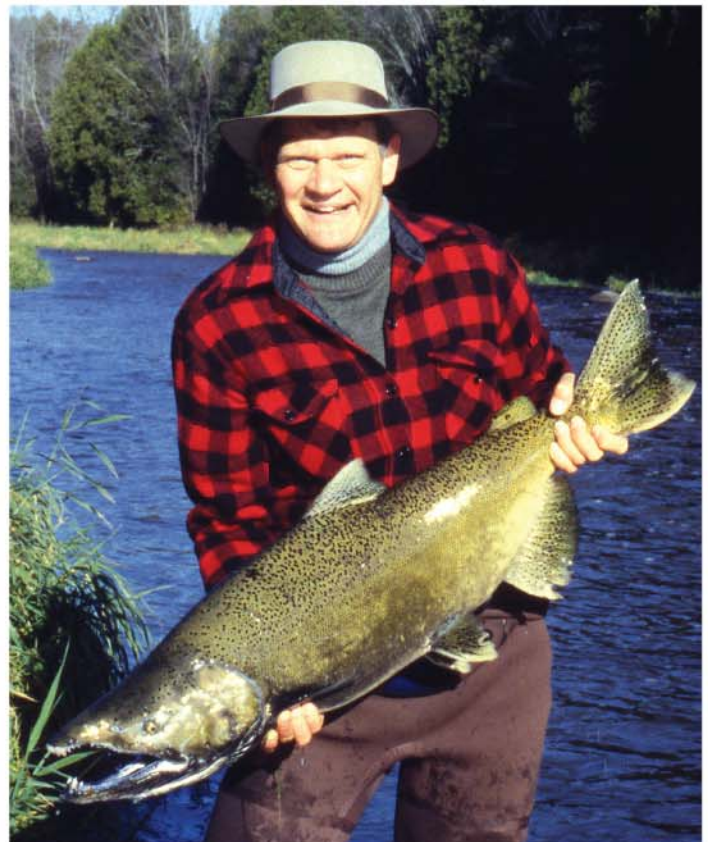
Q. Okay, they have sized up the stream and noted that the trout are feeding selectively. Besides "Matching the Hatch", which seems to be a common answer, what would you also advise our fly anglers to do to be more successful catching selectively feeding trout during a heavy hatch?

Rule One: Go immediately to an emerger imitation. Rule Two: Don't forget Rule One. Then use every slack line, slack leader tactic you know. Fishing down and across is the best way to achieve a perfect drag-free float, therefore, doing so at every opportunity that you have.

Q. Gary, let's pursue the topics of avoiding drag, slack line casting and what to look for in the leader-tippet-fly area during the float?

Since drag is 100% guaranteed when the line is cast onto moving water, then slack is essential. Period. Slack is extra line added to the cast that allows the angler to control the drift of the imitation so that it matches the drift of the natural. Slack may be added in many ways, but the only ways that are of any value are those that provide the fly caster control of the situation; in other words, the purpose of slack is to maintain control of the fly so it behaves as desired. In-the-air mending is the primary way to add controllable slack. On-the-water mending is secondary to in-the-air mending (it is done after in-the-air mending adds the necessary controllable slack). Sometimes, the only way one can mend is with on-the-water mending, but in-the-air mending should always be done first if possible. For example, a Reach Mend adds the controllable slack, and on-the-water flopping mends help to keep the slack under control. Since the leader is attached to the fly, then the leader needs to have slack in it to. This is accomplished by design rather than casting. The leader is designed to fall in S-curves, a la George Harvey's Terrestrial Leader. This, too, is essential when fishing a fly dead drift.

Q. About leader design, we now have several generations of fly anglers that have never constructed a leader, using solely commercially prepared, tapered leaders. What would you tell those anglers about the benefits of making your own leaders?



“Rolling your own” offers the fly fisher instant control of this most critically important piece of equipment. Recently while fishing with a friend in Colorado, we encountered a windy day (imagine that)), and his leader would not perform at all. I built him a new one in a couple of minutes that allowed him to deliver the fly with just enough slack to get a perfect float. The day was a grand success. Understanding leader design is not just fun, it can be the difference between frustration and success. I always carry material that allows me to quickly build leaders to match conditions.



Q. I've used your Unibody Nymphing leader design and it works. Describe a typical Unibody Nymphing leader setup, and explain how you developed the system.

This design came about over 25 years ago as a response to problems I was having with the standard long tippet tactic while using split shot. I'd use 5 or 6 feet of 5X, for example, as the tippet and clamp a shot on about 10 to 12 inches above the fly. Two problems immediately became evident. (1) The shot would eventually slide down to the fly, demanding constant repositioning and re-clamping. (2) The section of tippet immediately above the shot was getting chewed up as it whacked into rocks and other bottom structure.

I resolved this by using a four-foot tippet of 0X or 1X and then knotting 10 to 12 inches of 5X to the end of the heavier tippet section. The shot goes above the knot so it can't slide down onto the fly, and the heavier tippet section takes the abrasion from the rocks much better. This two-piece tippet is called a Compound Tippet.

I then discovered that if I took off the shot and replaced the short section of 5X with a 3 to 4 foot section, I had a dang good Harvey Style dry fly leader. If I took off the end tippet piece and cut the 0X or 1X back to 2 feet I had a great long fly leader.

The Leader Body (butt + taper sections) had to be strong enough to turn over the shot but not overpower the leader when used for dry fly work. Thus, in the end, the “standard” UniBody Nymph Leader (for use on 4 through 7 weight systems) consists of 4 feet of .020 inch Maxima Chameleon (MC), 1 foot of .015 or .013 inch MC, 4 feet of 0X or 1X tippet material (your choice), and a final tippet section of whatever size is needed (usually 3X through 5X).

Q. Gary, you have written and lectured about water depth and light penetration from the standpoint of color. Review for our reader how different colors of light are absorbed in the water column and how understanding this helps in selecting fly patterns? Please provide our readers with a few examples.

The vertical transmission of light is an interesting

phenomenon. Clear water absorbs specific colors of the light spectrum differentially. The spectrum of white light can be broken down into red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet components (a rainbow, for example). Clear water absorbs these colors in that same sequence: red is completely absorbed by 6 feet down; orange by 15 feet; yellow by 21 feet; green by 27 feet; the blues by 30 feet. Thus, a red fly will appear a shade of gray below 6 feet unless it is a color of red that has a little orange in it.

Q. That is well and fine for clear water, but what if the water has particulates such as algae or tannins in it?

When water contains algae or tannins it absorbs the various wavelengths of light differently than clean water. In water with a significant amount of algae, both the red and the blue are all gone by 6 feet down; this is because the plants use red and blue light for photosynthesis. All the other wavelengths are absorbed basically the same as light in clear water. In a bog lake, with a high tannin content, all the light is basically absorbed by 10 feet down. Red makes it to 6 feet; orange, yellow, and green get to 9 feet; and blue only makes it to 4 feet. This can have real significance if one is attempting to present a specific color at a depth below its threshold depth. Fluorescent materials, however, retain their colors as long as there's light! And black is always black!

Q. How do you believe a trout would see the same fly presented at different depths? It seems to me if I were swimming in a lake, the backdrop would look different to my side the deeper I swam. How does the background that a fish sees a fly against change the deeper a fly travels in the water column?

This is Background space light, the color of the water as it appears in a horizontal direction. In clear water at a depth less than 6 feet, the water appears a light, silvery blue. The deeper one gets the darker this coloration becomes.

Background space light only adds more complications to the overall picture. Suddenly, one has to design flies

according to the color of the water in which they are to be fished. Well, there is some truth to that if one wants to accent a color or design an attractor fly with an emphasized color. But if the imitation matches the color of the natural, then the fish will see it in the same light (yes, a pun and not a pun) as the natural. Fluorescent colors don't change, and black is black.



Q. How does this relate to fish seeing in color as opposed to black and white? And what about areas of the electromagnetic spectrum that humans cannot see, such as UV?

Color vision in fish is a response to background space light. A color-blind fish would only see in shades of gray (called the gray level). So if a food organism had the same gray level as the background space light, it would be invisible to the fish. Color vision allows the fish to differentiate food organisms by their hue (specific color), their chroma (intensity of color or color saturation), and by their gray level. Some fish have developed UV vision, allowing them to see beyond the blue range and into the near ultra-violet, detecting "colors" that to us are black. Certainly color detection is not the only way fish detect prey, but it goes a long way toward helping.

Q. That is a good point. I believe I have heard you suggest, "as fly anglers, we should not solely judge a fly by its appearance, but we should also consider its acoustic characteristic."

Fly fishing developed around the visual feeding behavior of trout and salmon. Thus, our traditional fly designs have been largely based on visual triggers--size, shape, color (including flash, fluorescence, holographic materials, etc.), and movement. But with the coming of age of fly fishing, many anglers are finding the need to step outside the traditional fly-design box and develop imitations that not only look right but also have the correct "acoustic footprint." That is, the imitations must sound right. Most non-salmonid, sport-fishing species feed almost exclusively on baitfish, crustaceans, and mollusks, and their feeding is as much triggered by the sound of their prey as by the sight of it. Even such

strongly visual feeders as trout are readily triggered to feed by the sound of a swimming minnow, leech, or mouse.

Q. My clients and I have had wonderful experiences fishing for large predatory Browns at night (though a little moonshine never hurts, pun intended). From a Brown's standpoint, what do you suppose he is keying on?

The acoustic footprint creates a powerful trail for the predator to follow, often more powerful than the visual footprint. Cave dwelling fish, for instance, which must live in total darkness, have lost their sight entirely and depend completely on their hearing. But even fish living under normal day/night cycles depend strongly on the auditory footprint when hunting under certain conditions. For example, after dark, fish use the acoustic footprint to locate the general position of their prey, and then, when they get close enough, they feed by sight. Even in the daytime, the acoustic footprint can often be detected farther away than can the visual footprint; for instance, in muddy water, tannic-acid stained waters, waters with high turbidity caused by algae, etc. At depths greater than 20 feet in clear water, much of the light is gone, and fish must rely heavily on their hearing in order to locate prey. Thus fish, as must most predators, rely on both visual and auditory triggers to detect prey and to feed. Flies that truly match the naturals must therefore offer both visual and auditory stimuli.

Q. Carrying that thought a bit further, what are your thoughts on baitfish patterns?

Unfortunately, the concept of the need for only a visual representation of a food organism has also slopped over



into minnow imitations and other critters that create a lot of noise when swimming under water or in the surface. These organisms not only need to be represented by their visual footprint, but by their acoustic footprint, as well. Simply put, if the organism displaces water to any degree, our flies should represent this too.

Q. What about acoustic footprints of predators from the prey's standpoint?

As you might guess, from the prey's standpoint, the auditory footprint of a predator literally shouts "danger", even if the predator is not visible. For example, bonefish will shy away from the pressure wave of a flats boat, even if the boat is not moving. Many times, I've had to make long casts to trout in lakes simply because they would not allow the boat to get closer than 50 to 60 feet. Likewise, awkward wading frequently spooks fish. And since sound is readily transmitted from the bank into the water, near-shore fish are easily spooked by the elephantine trudging of careless anglers.

There were so many more questions I wanted to ask Gary, but space was limited. I can only hope that every fly angler, from novice to advanced, would at sometime in their fly-fishing journey get to see and listen to Gary Borger speak. It is that simple. As you may have noted from the interview, Gary has a great deal of knowledge, experience and understanding in the area of fly-fishing. Nevertheless, it is Gary's talent to communicate that sets him aside from the pack. Whether or not you ever have that opportunity, read one of his books or watch one of his videos. You will not be disappointed! At the very minimum, explore his website at <http://www.garyborger.com>.



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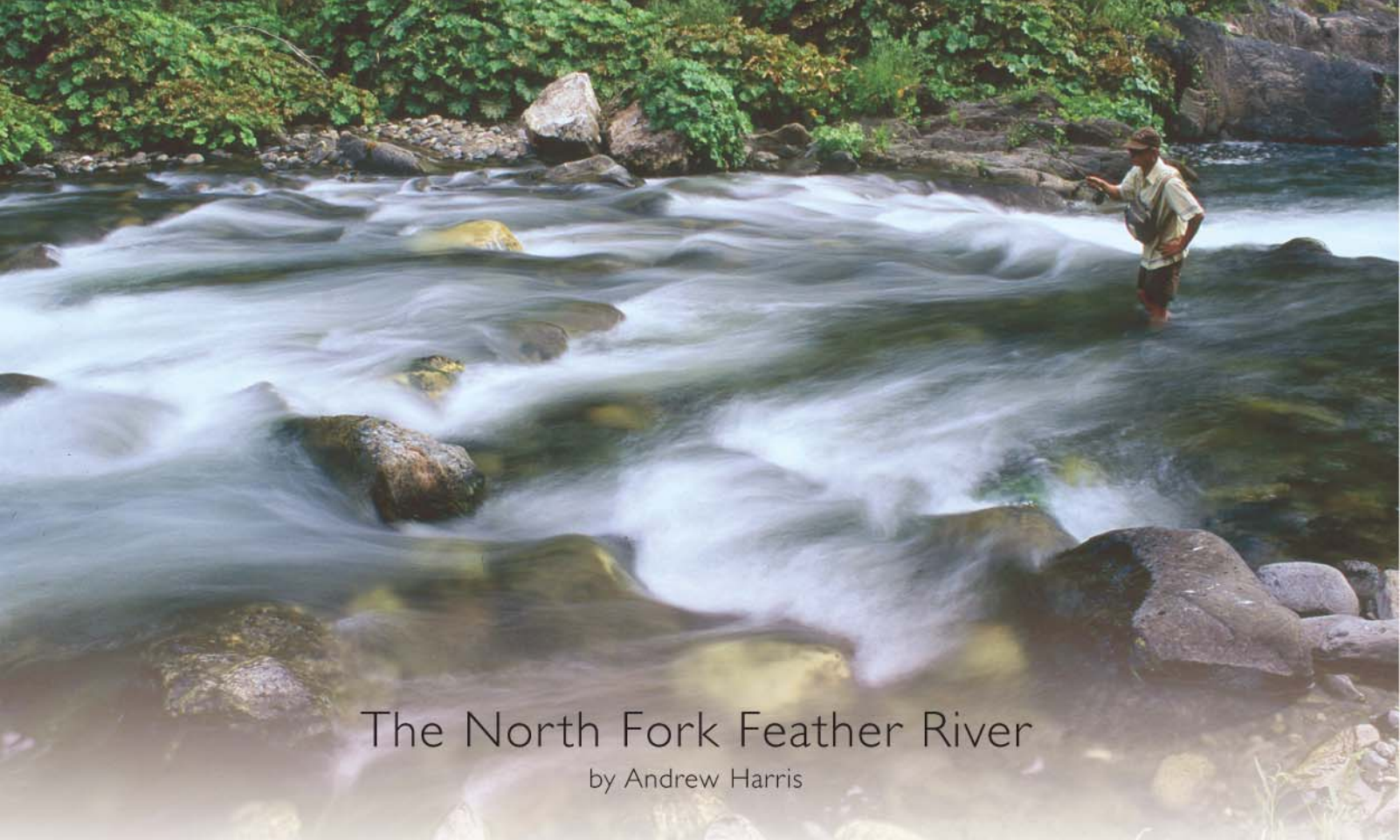
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The North Fork Feather River

by Andrew Harris

The North Fork Feather River comes to life in the snowmelt and springs on the southeast slopes of Mount Lassen and flows for over 70 miles before terminating in Lake Oroville. While the river may be more famous for its dams, railroads and gold rush history, it's also a fine trout stream with a great deal of variety. The headwaters and tributaries offer an enjoyable small-stream experience, while the lower reaches will challenge you physically and technically. There are many roadside opportunities and some that are off the beaten path. The river also has quite a bit of year-round fishing in the lower reaches. If you are looking for a quality trout destination, the North Fork Feather River can deliver at almost any time of year.

The Lay of the Land

The river can be divided into four distinct sections from an angler's perspective: the headwaters, the Almanor Reach, the Belden Reach, and the Feather River Canyon. The headwaters section is the river above Lake Almanor. The river below Lake Almanor is diced up into different sections by PG&E's hydropower projects. Like most hydropower projects in the Sierra Nevada, the projects on the North Fork of the Feather River are bypass reach projects. A diversion dam is built to divert water into a tunnel which feeds a powerhouse some miles downstream. The river in between the dam and powerhouse is left with a relatively meager flow, since most of the water in the river is going through the tunnels to generate power. The Almanor Reach is the section starting at Lake Almanor dam and terminat-

ing downstream at Belden Forebay. The Belden Reach is the section between Belden Forebay and the confluence of the North Fork with the East Branch of the North Fork at Highway 70. The Feather River Canyon is the part of the North Fork along Highway 70. This section encompasses three bypass reaches: Rock Creek, Cresta, and Poe.

Fishing regulations vary along the North Fork Feather River. Above Lake Almanor, the season starts the Saturday preceding Memorial Day and is open through November 15th. From Lake Almanor dam downstream to Belden Bridge, the river is open during the regular trout season, the last Saturday in April through November 15th. The river is open to fishing year-round below Belden Bridge. The only gear restrictions are between the Belden Bridge and Cresta Powerhouse, where there is a zero limit and barbed hooks and bait are not allowed. With the exception of some areas above Lake Almanor and near Caribou where fish are stocked during the summer, the river is by and large a wild trout stream.

The North Fork of the Feather River fishes best in the late winter, spring and fall when water temperatures are at their coolest. The majority of the hatches occur during the spring and fall months. Concentrate on the headwaters and Almanor reaches during the summer months. Water temperatures stay lower in these parts of the river. Water temps are frequently in the high 60s and low 70s in the Belden Reach and in the Feather River Canyon from July through September. These

temps are outside the favorable range for trout, so the fishing slows down quite a bit. Look for whitewater and places where tributaries enter the stream to find higher concentrations of trout.

The Headwaters

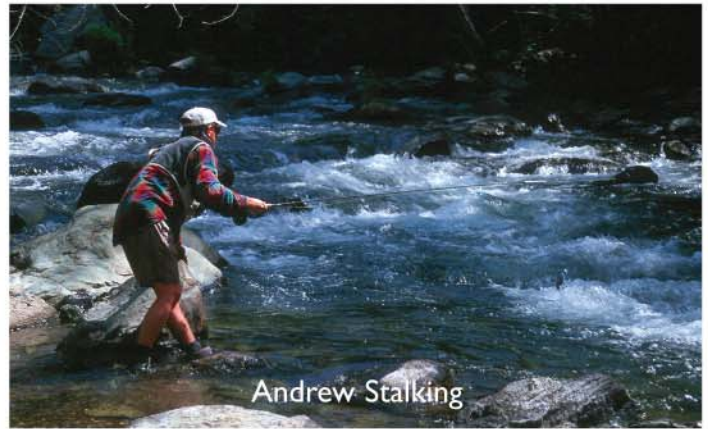
This area is a delightful playground of streams that come together to form the North Fork of the Feather River. By the time it reaches Chester, where it flows into Lake Almanor, the river has a flow of approximately 100 cfs in the summer. To protect spawning rainbows coming up from Lake Almanor, the river opens the Saturday before Memorial Day, about a month later than other rivers in the area. The river stays nice and cold throughout the season, rarely rising above 60 degrees. The tributary streams are all productive and worthy of attention. The streams in this area are usually fishable by mid-June. The area is well served by a variety of paved and dirt logging roads, and there are several campgrounds along the river. DFG plants truckloads of catchable-size rainbows in this part of the river.

Almanor Reach

The Almanor reach is a long stretch of river, about 11 miles from Lake Almanor dam to Belden Forebay. The standard release from Lake Almanor is 30 cfs, but by the time it reaches Belden Forebay, there is about 50-75 cfs due to springs and small tributaries along the way. Evening fishing is often excellent, with many 6-12" fish rising to dries. Bright sunny days call for nymphs, which can be fished indicatorless on a short line in most situations. This reach is usually fishable from the beginning of trout season to end. However, after a really big winter, the river may be blown out until June. The Almanor Reach can be accessed from Lake Almanor dam, Belden Forebay, or via dirt road to Seneca, a small outpost in the middle of this reach. There is a good angler's trail beginning at Belden Forebay. The trail allows access to about two miles of stream.

Belden Reach

This reach is accessed by Caribou Road, a paved road that goes alongside the river from Highway 70 to Belden Forebay. There are three campgrounds in the downstream half of this reach. Hatchery trout are planted in the vicinity of these campgrounds, but wild fish predominate upstream. Flows below Belden Forebay are in the 50-75cfs range. This is a popular opening day spot since the early spring runoff is usually stored by the dams upstream. The water is also warmer in this reach than upstream, frequently reaching the high 60s in the summer months. Despite the higher temperatures, the fishery holds up pretty well throughout the season. The banks of the river are lined with poison oak and blackberry bushes in this area, so it's a good idea to hop in the river and fish straight upstream from the water. Wet wading is the way to go in the summer months. Just be sure to use studded boots and a wading staff because the rocks are very slippery.



A successful day on the Belden reach usually involves a lot of nymphing. Basic searching nymph patterns are the norm here. Bird's Nests, Hare's Ears, Princes, and Pheasant Tails in sizes 12-18 will serve you well. Black rubberleg stoneflies and golden stone patterns work very well in the spring months. Dry fly selections can be equally basic. Parachute mayfly patterns in various sizes will fool fish feeding on mayflies. It's a good idea to have large stonefly imitations on hand during the spring months and October Caddis imitations during the fall. Attractor patterns such as humpies, elk hair caddis, stimulators, and royal wulffs will bring up fish occasionally.

Feather River Canyon

Anglers in search of larger trout might do well to investigate the part of the North Fork known as the Feather River Canyon. Highway 70 follows the North Fork for nearly thirty miles, providing excellent fishing access. As you travel from Oroville to Quincy, the highway first comes down close to the river near the town of Pulga, which is right below Poe Dam. The highway stays near the river all the way to Gansner Bar, which is the confluence of the North Fork Feather River and East Branch of the North Fork. From that point, the highway follows the East Branch towards Quincy. This part of the river is split up into three reaches by three power dams: Rock Creek, Cresta, and Poe.

Of the three river reaches in the canyon, the lowest reach, below Poe Dam, is the least accessible and holds some of the biggest North Fork trout. The best places to access the Poe reach are at Poe Powerhouse, Bardees



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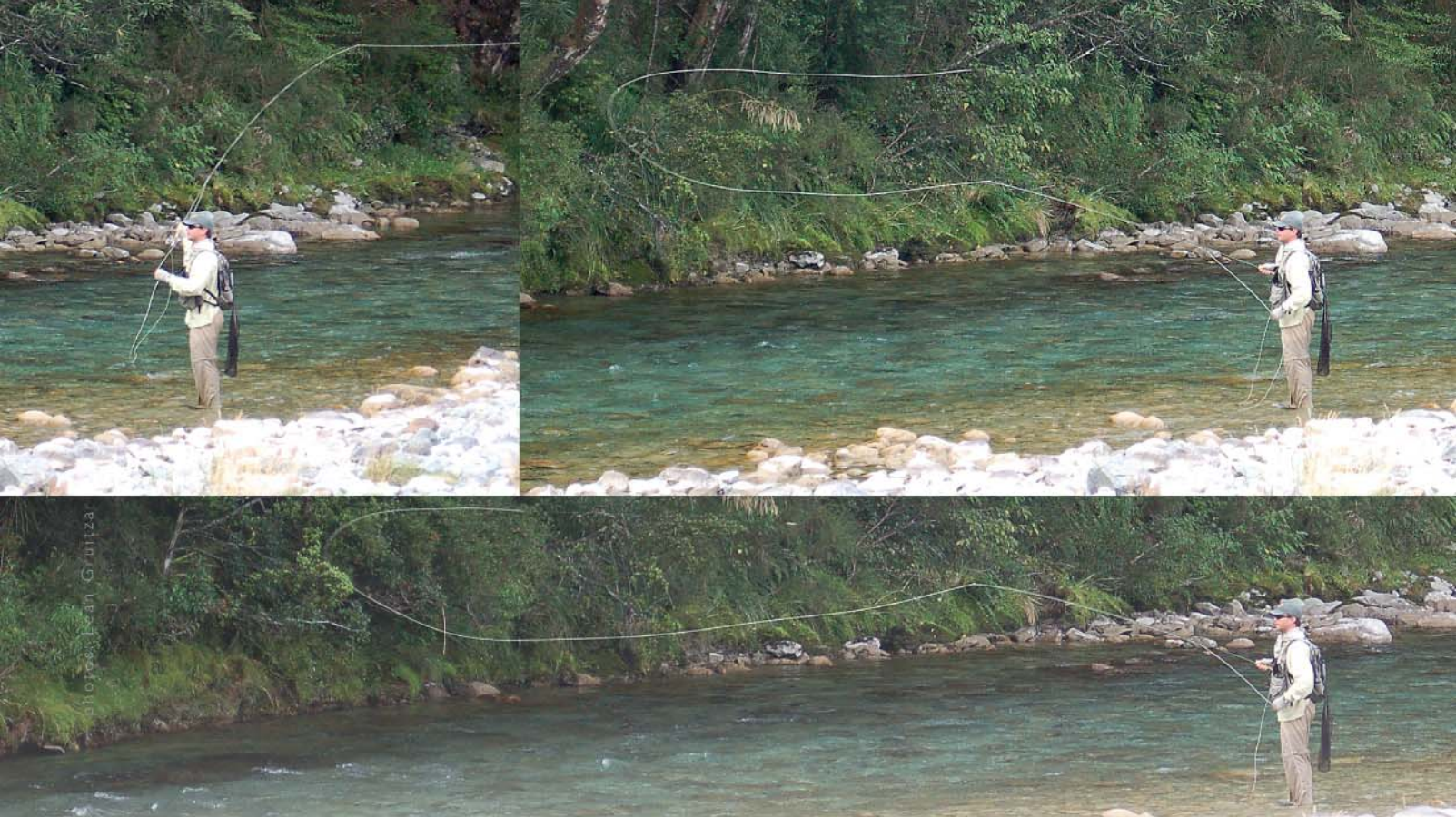
Bar, and Pulga. Detlow Road or Big Bend Road, which branch off Highway 70 about 7 miles west of the Pulga bridge, provide access to Poe Powerhouse and Bardees Bar. 4WD is required for the road to Bardees Bar. There is a lot of frogwater near Pulga, but you will encounter better water by hiking up or downstream. Access is much easier upstream in the Cresta and Rock Creek reaches.

Summer stream flows are controlled by the dams and range from 150cfs to 325cfs. Winter flows tend to be a little higher, but the river is fishable most of the time. During spring runoff and after strong winter storms the river frequently blows out. Also be wary of recreational releases during the summer. PG&E releases water for rafters and kayakers one weekend a month from June to September. The releases are in the Rock Creek reach on Saturday and in the Cresta reach on Sunday, so only a small portion of the river is affected at any one time.

The river is dominated by rainbow trout which average nearly a foot in length. A few brown trout are recruited from tributary streams each year, but they are few and far between. As with most other west-slope Sierra rivers, the following rule of thumb applies to the North Fork: as stream elevation decreases, the number of trout decreases, but the average size of the trout increases. Sacramento pikeminnows, hardheads and Sacramento suckers are found throughout the system, but their numbers increase as you approach Lake Oroville. If you're going for larger trout in the lower reaches of the river, be prepared to hook into some of these alternative species.

Fly selection is not usually a problem in this part of the river. Dry flies usually work even in the middle of the hottest summer days. Attractor patterns in sizes 10-14 work best. When the fish won't come up to a dry, Hare's Ear, Bird's Nest, Pheasant Tail, and Prince nymphs work very well in sizes 10-16. Giant stoneflies hatch in March, April and May and can be imitated with an orange Stimulator in a size 6. Hatches on summer evenings include little yellow stones, caddis, and PMD mayflies. Grasshopper patterns work well in the summer and fall. There is also a decent hatch of isonychia mayflies in September and October. These are large (size 10), black, swimming mayflies that crawl out of the water to hatch. They can be imitated with a large A.P. nymph.

On the North Fork, if you're not catching fish, the problem usually has more to do with location than fly selection. The North Fork suffers from high temperatures in the summer, so the fish bunch up near the heads of pools where there is more dissolved oxygen. Unless you're a pikeminnow aficionado, don't waste time fishing the slow water. The more productive white-water sections are often separated by a short drive in the car. On this river, covering lots of water is the key to angling success. 



Becoming a Truly Keen Fly Caster: 1/2 Hour Practice Drill

By Dax Messett

I love technical angling situations that require accurate casts. Every fly angler wishes to develop the ability to consistently throw those beautiful, tight candy cane shaped loops on their overhead cast. It is the essence of our sport, as superb instructor Mel Kreiger frequently pointed out. Many anglers simply never practice their casting, because they are too busy fishing! Yeah, they catch fish, but wish they could throw a tight loop and accurate cast on demand without having to think about it. The key is to understand the fundamental concepts of flycasting and to practice your stroke on the lawn, without the distraction of fish. A half hour on the lawn or casting pond a few times a week is all it takes to turn even a beginner into a keen fly caster.

The first and foremost fundamental concept regarding overhead casting, is to understand that **the shape of the loop is determined by the path of the rod tip**. Read that again, real slow, and let it sink in. Read it one more time, seriously. When trying to identify any issue you may be having with your loop, just refer back to this first fundamental concept, which is the premise of all fly casting. There are different styles of casting, but this foundation does not change.

Two primary things to focus on in this practice session are your “casting arc” and “stroke”. Timing, the

third crucial element to a good cast will come after doing this practice drill regularly.

Casting arc:

The *path of the rod tip* during an overhead cast has two stops in it. The distance between the back cast stopping point and the forward cast stopping point is called the **arc**. The size of your loop is determined by the size of this arc. The wider the arc, the wider the loop...not a good thing. A wide loop does not turn the leader over completely, therefore lacks accuracy, power, and distance. The narrower the arc, the narrower the loop. A narrow loop will turn over a leader accurately, penetrate the wind, and maximize distance. A good loop basically looks like a candy cane. Think how a Ferrari is shaped, then how a VW bus is shaped...which one would you chose in a race.

This is where the old clock face analogy comes into play. The distance between your back and forward stops should be between 11 and 2, resulting in a tight arc and narrow loop...good! 9 to 3 has a very wide arc, therefore results in a wide loop that lands into a pile just in front of your rod tip....not good.



Correct Back Cast Stopping Position



Correct Forward Cast Stopping Position

Stroke

There are many casting strokes that work, but I personally favor a compact, *vertical casting stroke*. You rotate your shoulder with this stroke, and your elbow goes up and down during this rotation, while keeping everything compact and your wrist fairly stiff. A compact stroke generates a compact arc which leads to a tight loop...good! A stroke that has a lot of wrist movement and arm extension generally leads to wide, open loops...bad.

The basic stroke starts with the rod tip down, your elbow at your side, and your forearm inline with the rod. Avoid starting your cast with the rod tip pointed up high...you lose all the power that would go into loading the rod on your backcast. There should be a 90degree angle between your bicep and forearm...see photo.

Next, distinctly **rotate** your shoulder up as if you were touching the brim of your hat, which lifts your forearm to a vertical position. Maintain that 90 degree angle and keep compact. **Stop** the rod, with your hand in the neutral position with a firm wrist, and the rod will magically stop at 11 o'clock. Even if you bend your wrist an inch, the rod will stop too far back, and lose the load. When stopped in the correct position, the weight

of the line behind the rod tip will cause the rod to bend, or **load**. This is the sweet spot. Now rotate your shoulder back down again and stop (**unload**) the rod at about 2. Avoid reaching out and extending, which will widen your arc and open your loop. Keep compact, and your forearm and bicep at that 90 degree angle, and the line will sling out there in a straight tight loop.

Practice

Use an old 7 to 9 foot 3x leader with a small piece of yarn or visible dry fly with the point clipped off.

1. **Pick up and lay down:** Strip off 15-18 feet of line off of your reel. Don't use your line hand yet, just place the line in your control finger of your casting hand, and relax your other arm. This is just to warm up, get into a rhythm, and really focus on your vertical lift and stop during the backcast. Rotate the shoulder up, and distinctly stop the rod with your hand in its neutral position and tip up high. When the line straightens out behind you and the rod loads, rotate back down and stop the rod at 2. Don't reach out, just keep your forearm and bicep at the compact 90 angle, and lay the line on the ground nice and straight...no false casting yet, just pick up and lay down. 5 minutes



2. **False casting:** With the same 15-18 feet of line, start to make some false casts, and focus on the feel of the rod, loading and unloading. To establish timing, make 2 or 3 false casts then a presentation cast by laying the line down. Rotate up, rotate down. Don't use the line hand yet, just keep the line between your control finger. 5 minutes

3. **False cast/presentation:** Strip out 10 more feet of line, and introduce your line hand by just holding the line in between your index finger and thumb. Don't hold the line in your control finger anymore. Make three false casts, then a presentation cast. Do not change your stroke. 5 minutes.

4. **Shoot line:** Strip out another 10 feet of line. You should now have about 50 feet. Always start with 15-18 feet of line, instead of trying to aerialize 50 feet all at once. Do 3 false casts and shoot a few feet of line each time, then try to shoot the rest on the last cast. It is very important to try and do it in just 3 false casts...the more false casting you do, the more likely you are to lose your timing. Keep your stroke compact! You can easily shoot 50 feet of line while maintaining a compact stroke. 5 minutes.

5. **Accuracy:** This is fun. Throw a hat, plate, hula hoop or anything that will make a target at 15 feet. Try to hit it! Then move it to 20, 30, 40, & 50 feet away. Take the time to get proficient at the close range targets. 10 minutes.

I promise if you practice these steps in the manner in which they are described, you will be throwing controlled, tight, and accurate casts in very little time when muscle memory and rhythm is developed. Remember, don't get sucked into distance, short range accuracy is more critical for most technical angling situations, and distance is an eventual product of having controlled, tight loops.



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Trout Needs

by Frank R. Piscióttá

Rocks & Fallen Trees Fulfill the Three Trout Needs

OK...you now have all your basic flyfishing gear. What next? Have some fun and please don't take this sport too seriously. Someone once said that fishing is an excuse to take a walk in nature. Now, head for the river and get those trout! But, in order to have a chance of success, it is a good idea to know some things about your quarry.

A wild trout requires three things for survival; food, protection from predators and shelter from the current. If you as a fly fisher can identify all three of these trout needs in one specific area of a stream you have located a "prime lie"...this is where the trout lives. Since we know that trout feed under water 85-90% of the time, it is very important that you have this skill; the ability to "read water." In doing so, you become a more efficient fly angler and will present your fly to the most likely areas where a trout may eat your fly. I'm fond of saying that 20% of the water contains 80% of fish; conversely 80% of the water has only 20% of the fish. It is imperative you offer your fly in the most "fertile" water; you will simply hook and release more rainbows, browns and brookies.

FOOD

When feeding, a trout will place itself facing into the current and waits for the food come to it. The food will be drifting in the flow and the trout intercepts and ingests it. The minimal energy expended the better, which is why the trout will locate itself in the best "feeding lane." It cannot spend more energy than the caloric intake of the food item; if it does, it will not survive. It has to be as efficient as possible in its pursuit of nourishment. The main food groups are: aquatic insects, terrestrials, other trout and forage fish.

Notice I didn't say the trout faces "upstream" while feeding. The reason being, as an example, is that it can be positioned in a swirling eddy. Here the trout may

actually be facing downstream "facing into the current", looking directly at you as you approach moving upstream and alerting it of your presence, a possible predator. As an aside the reverse is true in a lake, here the trout swims to where the food is located.

PROTECTION FROM PREDATORS

At all costs, a trout will avoid being eaten. While resting, feeding or reproducing, a protective sanctuary must be nearby and easily accessible so that the trout can rush to it in an instant when the threat of danger presents itself. The "security lie" can be a space under a rock or log. The structure provides safety as long as the pursued can scurry beneath, under or through, as in bank-side, underwater tangle roots, which is not accessible to the hunter. Danger can come from above or below. Examples of predators; from above, are osprey, mergansers or river otter, and from the below, larger predator trout (they do eat their own!).



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SHELTER FROM THE CURRENT

Basic hydrology dictates that a mid-stream boulder, fallen tree, or irregular bottom rubble will break, divert or slow the water's velocity. Such an obstruction makes for a "comfort zone" from which the trout can rest or actively feed. As an example, relative to the boulder; the "cushion" in front of it or long slick or "pocket-water" behind the boulder provide calm water where the trout expends minimal effort resting...conserving energy (see FOOD above). Also, on either side of the boulder, as the water flows around the obstruction, "seams" or "creases" are created between the fast water passing around the boulder and slow water of the eddy. Here, the trout will wait in the slow-side of the converging water, dash out into the fast water to get a drifting food item and returns, quickly. The trout can position itself on either side of the obstruction and be in position to sprint out for the food. Or, better yet, remain at the bottom vortex of the converging seams at the lower end of the slick created by the boulder. Here it can efficiently work BOTH current seams.

WATER TEMPERATURE...

THE CAVEAT

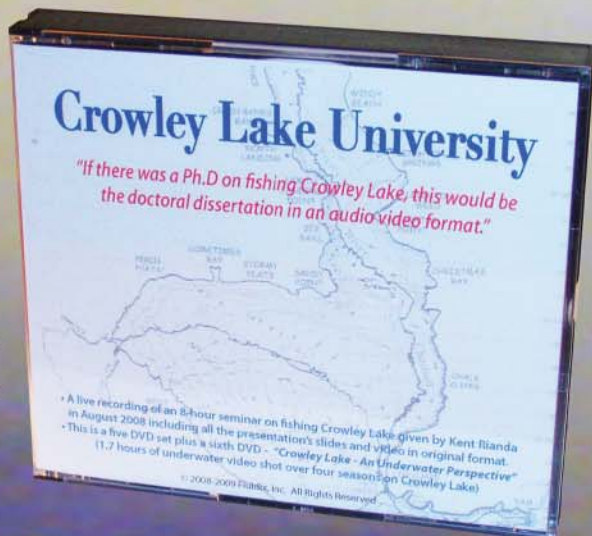
Your knack of where to find trout in the river and cast your fly may be moot if the water temperatures impact the trout's feeding metabolism. If too high or low, the trout will become lethargic (water is too cold) or become stressed (water is too warm; insufficient oxygen content); hence not feed actively. For simplicity sake, let us say 50-66 degrees are optimum water temps. But be aware that each moving or still water has its own specific temperature range for the trout's ideal comfort and eating. So, make sure that a stream thermometer is an essential part of your fly angling paraphernalia.



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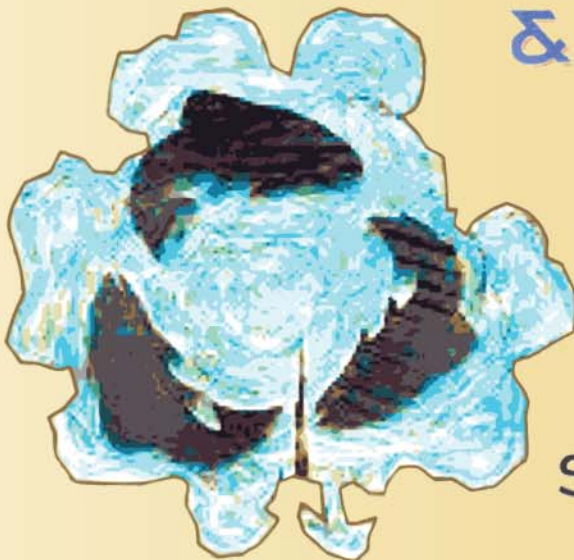
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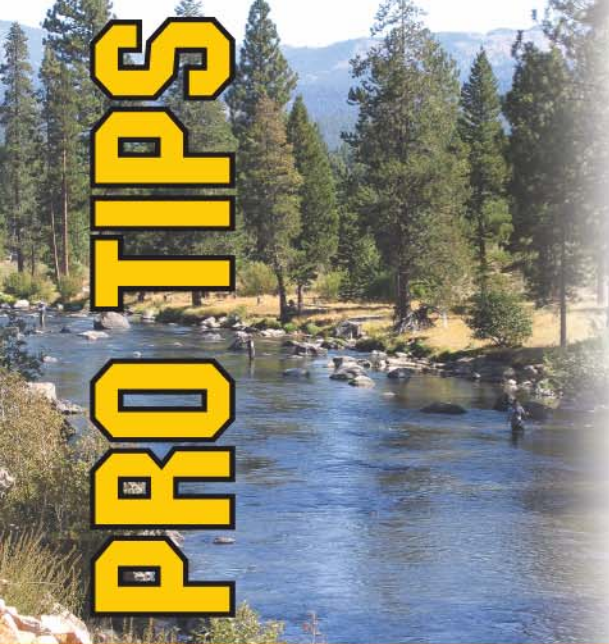
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Angling Etiquette is a broad topic as it applies to fly fishing. Simply, I believe the Golden Rule of “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” applies regardless of where and how you fish. A good dose of common sense also applies when interacting with other anglers. We are on the water because we want to experience an enjoyable fly angling experience.

There are different types of civility while wade-fishing, drifting-fishing or lake angling. Lake angling customs are different than when we drift-fish a river. This installment of “Pro-Tips” we are focused on etiquette as it applies to wading streams

Another consideration is that angling etiquette can be pertinent to a specific body of water; as in a river, lake or more broadly region. For instance the Little Truckee in the Tahoe region requires different manners as one would find at Hot Creek or Hat Creek. In the former, local etiquette requires a minimum 50 yards of spacing between fly anglers, while at the latter...as little as a cast apart.

Some interesting suggestions appear below; expounding on some of the general ideas mentioned above. One advice I never considered, but it has always been an issue of politeness if you spend a lot time wading in moving waters.

-Frank R. Pisciotta

ETIQUETTE - WADING STREAMS

When venturing to non-home-waters the first thing I do is go to the local fly shop and ask about the appropriate stream etiquette for a specific body of water. I'm looking for info relative to acceptable separation in amount of feet or water-types such as runs, holes or bends in the river. If there is no fly shop I'll look for a person who looks like a “local” and request an assist as to where I might find the information.

In the absence of the two aforementioned possibilities, I'll go to the stream. While there, initially, I'll wait and observe. If I see a person there who looks like they know the water, I'll wait for an opportune time and ask them for advice on etiquette. Obviously, if there is no one present, I'll just start fly fishing and apply my own, perceived etiquette; the hope being that it is reciprocated if another angler comes into the same area.

-Molly Semenik, www.tietheknotflyfishing.com

Let's face it, with so many anglers and guides/clients on public water these days there just aren't too many secrets left. This is why private water angling has become so popular. This impact has brought about a resurgence of something we call “Stream Etiquette”.

Where I grew up learning the art and traditions of fly-fishing in Northern Scotland, I was always instructed to fish upstream and give way to anglers I encountered along my way. I remember asking my uncles “what do I do when I come up on someone?” Their reply was forthright and very practical as most Scottish advice is. “Just go around them, and go around far enough not disturbing them!” Simple.

Rules or protocols on the river may vary a little by region however, the most important ingredients are good manners mixed with a little common sense. You can't be angry if another angler or guide and client have beaten you to your favorite run or pool regardless if they are local or from out of town. Simply “go around them and go far enough around them that you do not disturb there fishing!”

-Pat Timmins, www.rawhbranch.com

I'm a steelheader; and if I see someone stepping on redds, I advise the angler, in no uncertain terms, to “Get off the redds!” To me, being on redds is a major violation of etiquette in moving waters; regardless of whether the angler is unaware of their fishery-degradation or not. Some anglers just don't realize the damage they are causing, so it is our job to educate those anglers.

When I approach a section of water that I want to fish and I see an angler already there, generally, I'll move-on and will go to another run. Many times we access spots by drift boat, so it's easy to just go to the other side of the river or float to the next run. If there is an angler I'm familiar with, I'll ask if I can join them; providing there is sufficient room so that we both can efficiently work the water.

-Zac Kaufman, www.morrisonlodge.com

When it comes to wade-fishing for steelhead, all an angler has to do is ask themselves one question. Would that behavior tick-me off? If you think twice about the answer, then DON'T DO IT! Being called a “low-holing #%+&* is not a compliment. When someone takes the time and effort to get on the water earlier than you, they deserve to fish that run; period. Do not wade-in 50 yards below them. The accepted method for swinging flies is to start at the head (top end) of the run, and fish downstream from there. However, one acceptable alternative is to simply ask if you can fish ABOVE THEM. Yes, I know this sounds counter-intuitive to a trout fly angler.

One last opinion; being in a drift-boat does not give one the right to fish water over someone who is wading! Have respect for one another and share the water.

-John Fochetti, foesweasel2001@yahoo.com

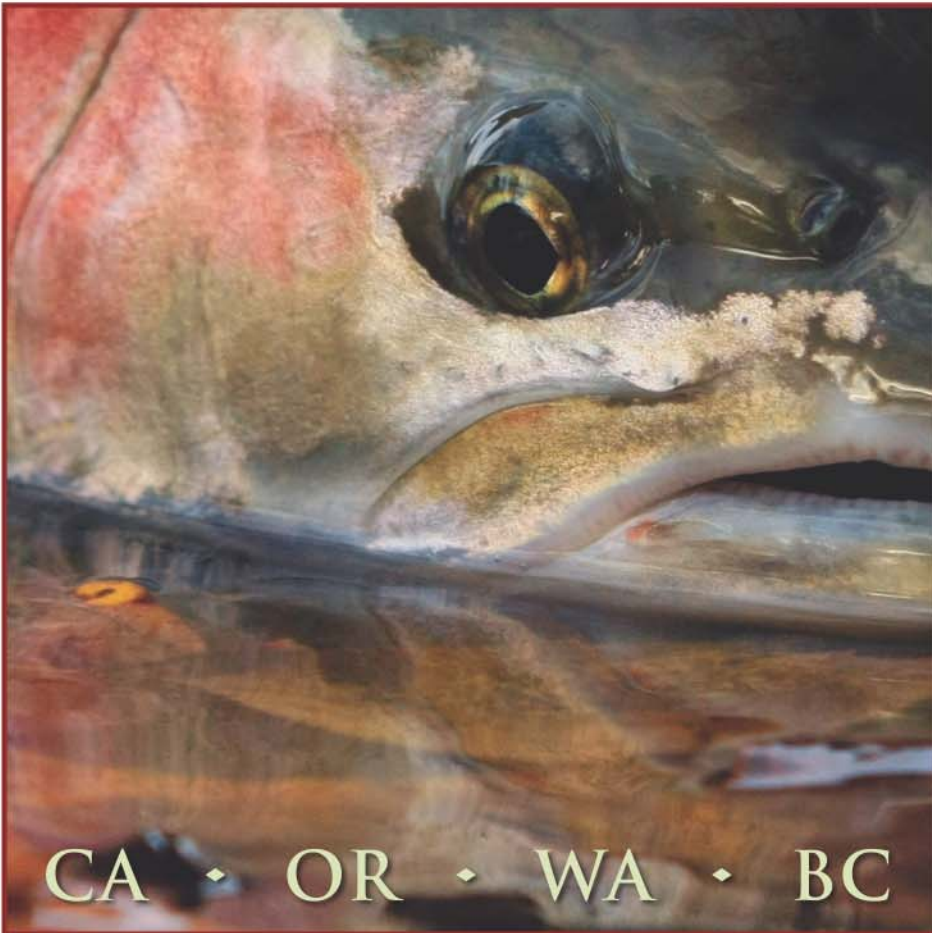
Let's face it; almost everyone who loves the outdoors has a dog. We can't leave our best friend at home, but it is important that you know your dog well; especially when you consider stream etiquette. I have seen dogs that sit on the bank and never leave their owner's side and others that run wild on the river, running through fishing holes and blowing-out fish. So, sadly enough if you can't control your best friend then it is best for everyone if you leave the pup home.

-Mike Curtis, info@tahoeflyfishing

Just ask... If you are on the river and see someone fishing a run and are not sure if it's all right for you to drop in and fish, just ask. You'd be surprised at how stoked fellow anglers react when you just simply ask a few questions. “Do you mind if I fish behind you in this run?”, or “Which way are you heading?”, “I'll fish downstream instead of up?”. Also, if you are fishing and see someone else looking to fish don't be that guy that reels in their line and races up, or downstream to the next best spot. Maybe ask that person which way they're heading, or how far they're going and simply give that person some space.

I've actually met a few friends this way by simply going up and talking to people. I've never met a person who became upset with me by talking with them. Most people are happy you asked and they may even give you a little insight on what the fish are eating, or maybe a beer if you're lucky. Their is always somewhere to fish even on the most crowded rivers, but if you do run into someone and aren't sure about proper etiquette, just ask.

-Matt Koles, www.gilligansguideservice.com



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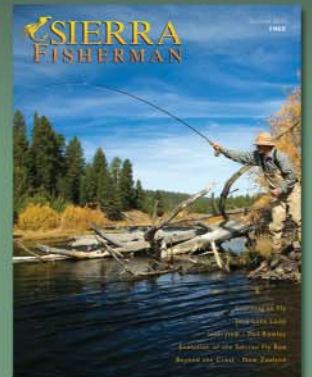
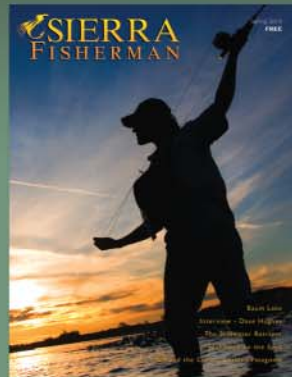
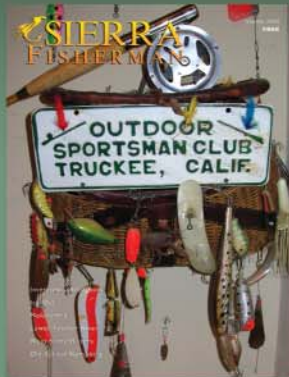
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June is when the real fun begins, Golden Stoneflies and Hex's. Yellow has definitely become one of my favorite colors. In this article, I am going to concentrate on the yellow mayfly, also known as the Hexagenia Limbata or Hex. The next article will be about the golden stonefly. You should be aware that the golden stone starts to hatch in late spring in the local rivers and should be taken advantage of.

The Hex hatch differs slightly from year to year, depending on the lake levels. The Hex nymph lives in U-shaped burrows which are located on muddy bottoms. The lower the lake, the more habitat lost. The nymph lives for two to three years in these burrows, only coming out to feed, relocate or finally hatch. The muddy silt in which the nymph lives, is called marl, which is high in clay and calcium carbonate. Muddy but firm bottoms, is where you should concentrate your efforts. The Hex hatch usually starts in mid June. From there, the next two week period is prime time. Overcast and warm evenings are typically the best conditions. Some adults will appear at the south end of Lake Almanor where the hatch will intensify and migrate north. Butt Valley Reservoir is very similar to Lake Almanor, the one difference being, the hatch starts about a week earlier. Mountain Meadow Reservoir has a Hex hatch also. The timing is the same, but you could be surprised with a giant large mouth bass.

Fishing the nymph starts earlier in the evening and lasts longer in

the year than fishing the adult. The nymph will move along the bottom most of the year scavenging for food. So, fishing the nymph on sinking lines on or near the bottom, stripped very slowly, is very effective. When fishing this method, I tie my imitation without weight. I always try to imitate the three forks of the tail: the moving gills along the abdomen, shell back, legs and eyes, in that order of importance. When fishing the nymph in the water column while it is emerging, I fish either an intermediate line or a floating line with a very long tapered leader, down to 5x. This method lets the fly sink a long time, but pay attention, many strikes will be on the drop. When retrieving the fly one general rule seems to work, a slow 4 inch strip with a 4 second pause, then repeat. The nymph has a very slow ascent toward the surface, undulating their bodies up and down. They will periodically pause and sink and start again, this is why you will get grabs on the drop.

The adult can be fished in three forms: cripple, dun and spinner. The spinner seems to be less effective than the former two. All can be fished with a dropper nymph, which can increase your effectiveness. You will want to increase your tippet size to 3x or 4x, depending on stiffness of your rod and how hard you tend to strike. When there are many naturals on the surface, a twitch and pause method can help your fly stand out. When fishing the adult, plan ahead, because when the hatch begins it is very close to nightfall and it will be getting dark. It makes more sense to cast your imitation towards any light, moon or setting sun, the silhouette will help spot the grab. This is one of those rare opportunities when you may very likely catch a nice, large cruising fish on a dry fly. My best fish last summer was a beautiful 27" brown trout. You know where I will be the same time this year. I can't wait to see that unforgettable Hex silhouette, dry fly fishing at its best. 

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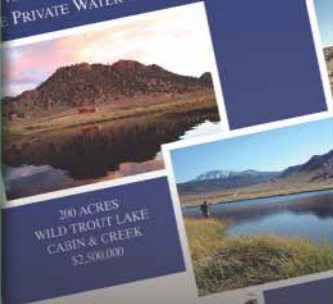
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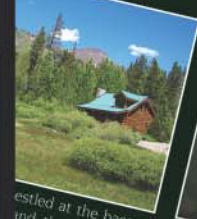


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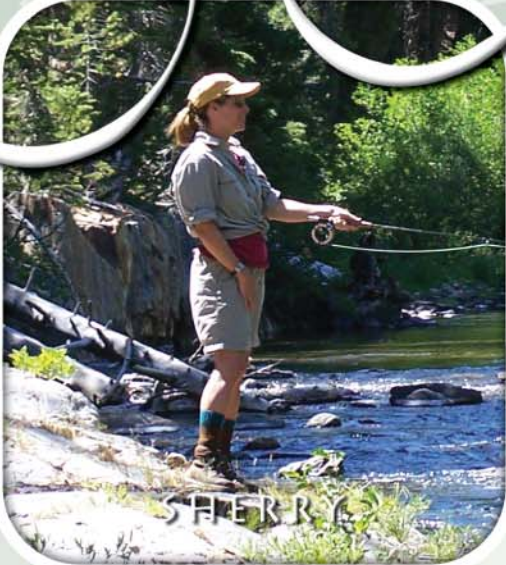
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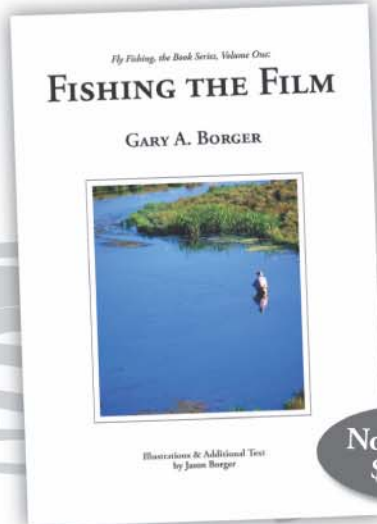
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Fly Tying By Lance Gray



Lance's Amber Wing Prince

The idea for my Amber Wing Prince nymph came to me while I was floating the Lower Sacramento. The nymph was tied with standard peacock herl that I made into chenille by using my dubbing tool and it was still coming apart. Fish after fish grab the fly and at the end of the day – well I was out of flies.

I decided to tie a fly that when fished would look like the original in the water with some extra twist. First I wanted the fly to sink fast, the second I wanted the fly to withstand the Lower Sac's rainbows grabs and runs, and third I wanted a fly that would imitate a stone and a caddis fly. Lance's Amber Wing Prince was born. Using a Daiichi 1530 hook I designed my creation. The 1530 is a strong short shank hook perfect size for a caddis fly, but also long enough once the material was tied on for a stone. I placed a Tungsten bead on the hook for quick sink rate and began to tie. I tied the tail as normal with the fork brown goose biots. I then went to my wire spools. I wanted a fly when the hackle surrounded it would have both iridescent properties but would be able to withstand the abuse of the fish. I tied on two separate colors of wire together on the top of the shank, extending back to the bend of the hook. I then wrapped them both forward until I came to the back of the bead. The wire wrap made a nice segmented body that had shine and iridescent. Staying with the natural brown hen neck hackle, I tied a hackle in that was one size larger than normal. Basically I used a 12 size hackle on a 14. This gave me the fibers that extended back to the hook

LANCE'S AMBER WING PRINCE

Hook: Daiichi 1530 Hook Size 12-16

Bead: Gold Tungsten Bead Size 7/64 for 12 & 14, Size 3/32 for Size 16

Thread: Tobacco Brown Danville 6/0 Thread

Tail: Brown Goose Biot

Body: Ultra Wire Green and Gold Small

Hackle: Natural Furnace Hen Hackle

Wing: Amber Goose Biot

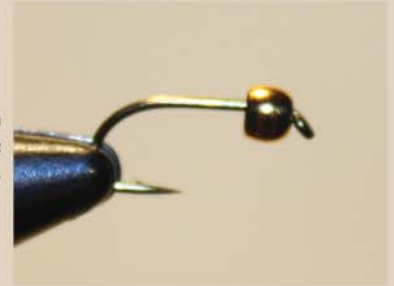
Head: Head Cement

bend. a great traditional wet style look. One full turn and I tied it off. I then finished the fly by placing the amber biot wing on each side of the fly. The amber biot extended half way back.

When this fly is fished it is truly amazing. It sinks great, takes the shape of an emerging caddis but has the coloration of a stone fly. One fly will last all day if you do not stick a snag. The best and the most important element of this fly is that it fouls more trout than the older version. I hope you enjoy it. 🦋

Tying Instructions

Step 1 - Place Tungsten bead onto hook. Place hook in vise.



Step 2 - Start thread behind bead and wind the thread back to the bend of the hook. At the bend of the hook tie in the two brown Goose Biot one on each. Extending 3/4 of length of shank in behind the bend of hook. Wrap thread forward and stop at the bead.

Step 3 - Tie in both pieces of wire. One gold and one green on top of the hook shank and work the thread back to the bend of hook. Wrap the wire forward at the same time to form body. Tie off the wire directly behind the bead.



Step 4 - Tie in brown hen hackle one size larger than hook. Place one turn of hackle around the fly and tie off right behind the bead.

Step 5 - Tie in the amber Goose Biot one on each side at the top of the fly.

The biot should extend only 1/2 the length of the hen hackle. Make the head with thread, whip-finish and head cement.





What is big, ugly and can't swim? If you answered Kathleen Turner or my ex-girlfriend, I like your style, but try again. If your answer was a Stonefly, be sure to send in your audition tape to Jeopardy pronto because you are a genius. Stoneflies are a large food source for salmonids in many of our trout and steelhead streams, and fish will make deliberate moves to take them, even outside of established feeding lanes.

Plecoptera are an order of insects commonly referred to as stoneflies. There are some 3,500 different species worldwide, with new discoveries still a common occurrence, where they inhabit every continent but Antarctica. Note to self, don't pull this pattern out and expect results in Antarctica.

Plecoptera are found in both the Southern and Northern hemispheres, and the populations are quite distinct although the evolutionary evidence suggests that species may have crossed the equator on a number of occasions before once again becoming geographically isolated.

Stoneflies remain in the nymphal form for one to four years depending on species, and undergo anything from 12 to 33 molts before emerging and becoming terrestrial as adults. The adults generally only survive for a few weeks, and emerge only during specific times of the year. Because of this elongated molt and long riverine gestation period, stonefly nymphs are always in the river and available to trout and steelhead as a good food source.

All species of Plecoptera are intolerant of water pollution and their presence in a stream or still water is usually an indicator of good or excellent water quality. Classic western trout rivers like the Madison, Deschutes,

SHARON STONE (SKWALA)

Hook: TMC 5263 sizes 4-12/ TMC 200R sizes 8-18

Bead: Gold bead

Thread: Uni Yellow 6/0

Tail: Gold Goose Biots

Ribbing: 2x monofilament, medium bronze Uni wire, or small brown micro tubing

Abdomen/Thorax: Hareline Dubbin Yellow Sally

Wing Case: Crawfish Thin Skin

Legs: Brown Rubber legs

Antennae: Gold Goose Biots

Weight: .15 lead wraps under body dubbing and thorax

Other Variations: Black (substitute black bead), Golden and Purple (Steelhead)

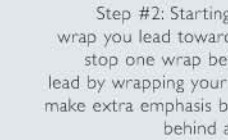
Truckee and Snake all have high densities of multiple stonefly species.

I'll introduce you to one of my favorite patterns, the Sharon Stone, which is a highly effective pattern that if tied in different sizes and colors, will represent just about every species of Plecoptera from tiny black winter stones to the giant salmonfly. As many anglers say, stoneflies are a pain in the rear to tie, and fishing them effectively means dredging the bottom and losing a fair share of nymphs. If this pattern took the better half of your Sunday afternoon and looks too good to fish, it also doubles as a decorative piece to compliment any fly box. 🦋

Tying Instructions



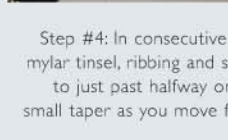
Step #1: Slide the bead on the hook in the reverse direction (wide gap facing forward) and place the hook in the vise.



Step #2: Starting at the back of the hook, wrap you lead towards the front of the fly and stop one wrap before the bead. Secure the lead by wrapping your thread over the lead and make extra emphasis by building up thread both behind and in front of your wrap.



Step #3: Take you thread to the back of the hook and make a small dubbing ball, which will help flare the tail, and tie in the two goose biots.



Step #4: In consecutive steps, tie in the thin skin, mylar tinsel, ribbing and start dubbing the body up to just past halfway on the hook. Try to make a small taper as you move forward with the dubbing.



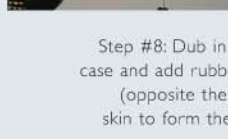
Step #5: Bring up the mylar tinsel and thin skin and secure with thread. Clip the tinsel but leave the thin skin and bring up the ribbing and segment the body in even wraps. Secure the ribbing with thread.



Step #6: Create another dubbing ball, tie in knotted rubber legs on each side in front of dubbing ball, pull the thin skin back towards the back of the hook, and cut to form the first wing case.



Step #7: Repeat Step #6 again while adding one more piece of thin skin to form the second wing case.



Step #8: Dub in front of the second wing case and add rubber legs that face forwards (opposite the back two) and tie in thin skin to form the last wing case and head.



Step #9: Tie in goose biots on each side of the bead with the concave sides of the biot facing each other. Clip excess.



Step #10: Pull the remaining thin skin forward over the bead, cut to size and glue to the bead, dub the head and whip finish.



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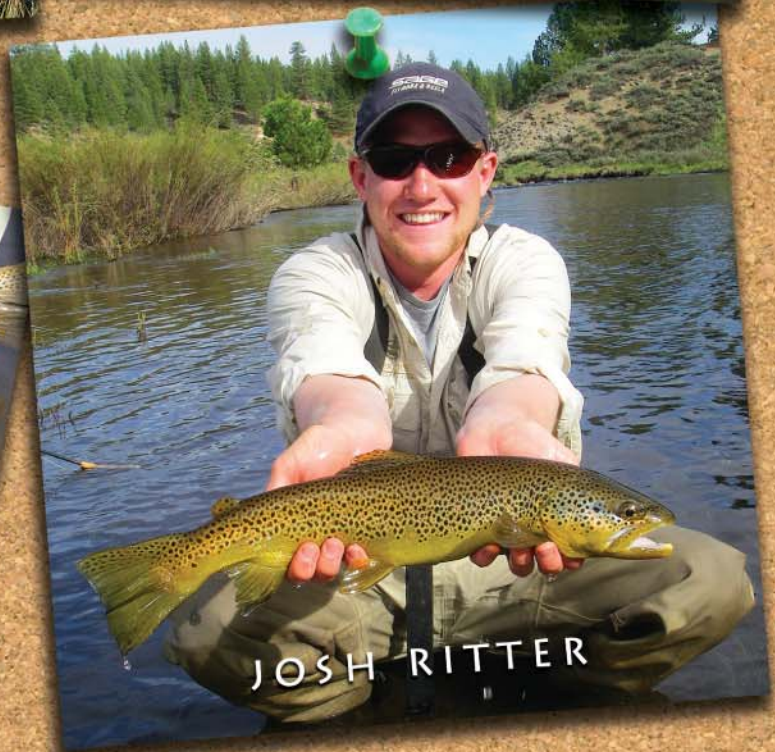
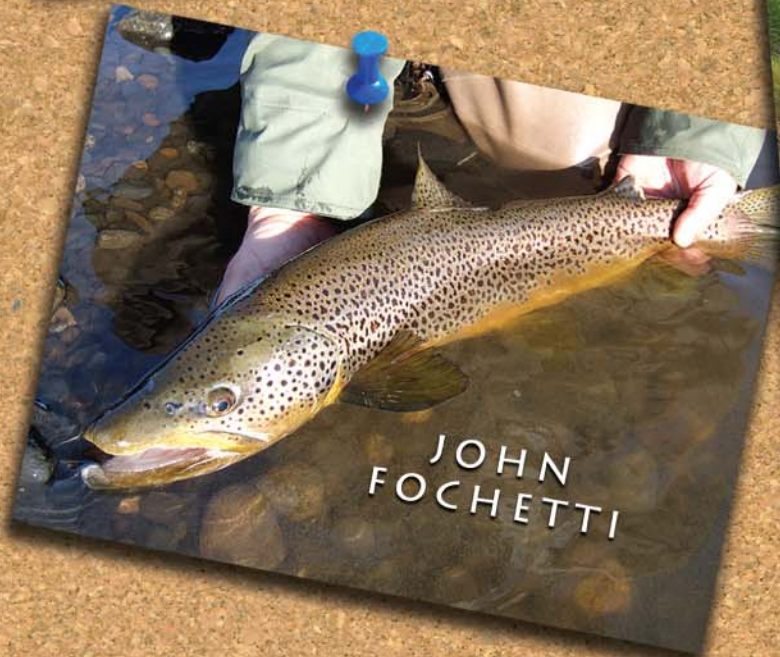
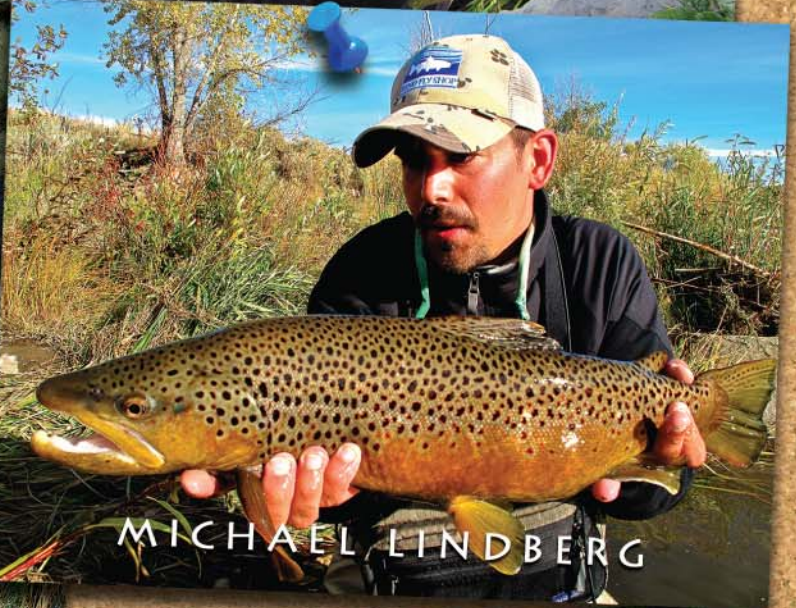
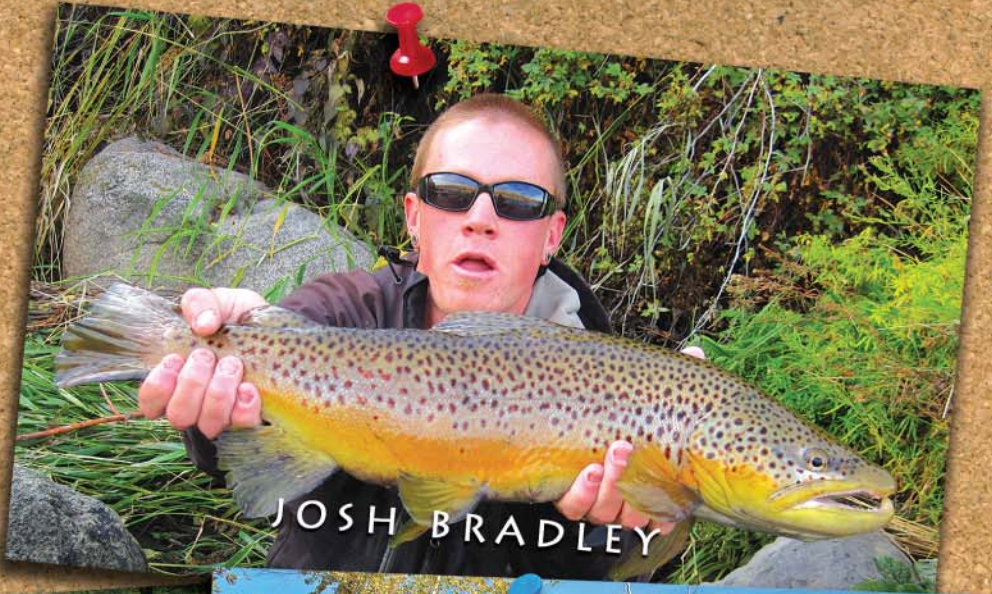


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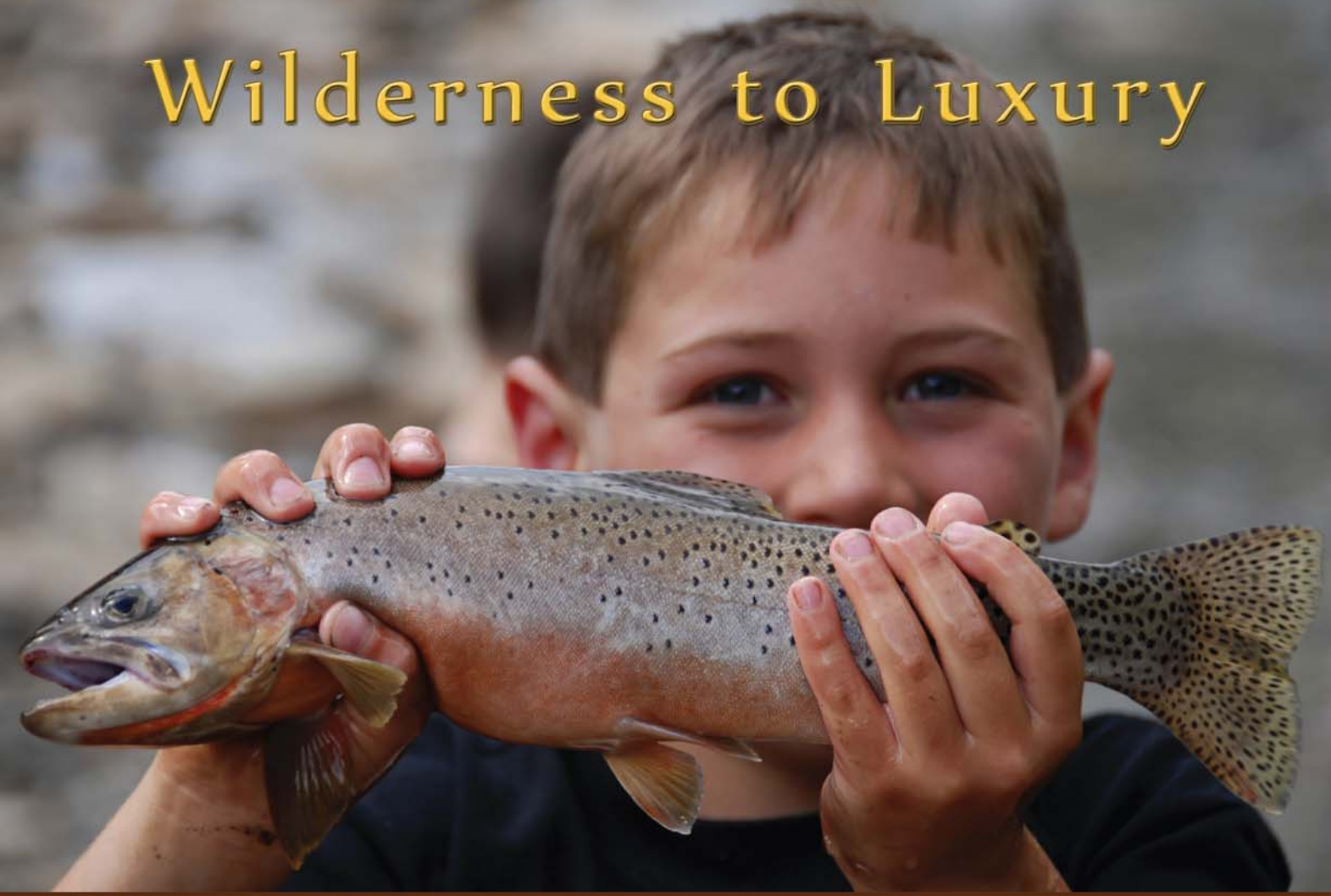
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